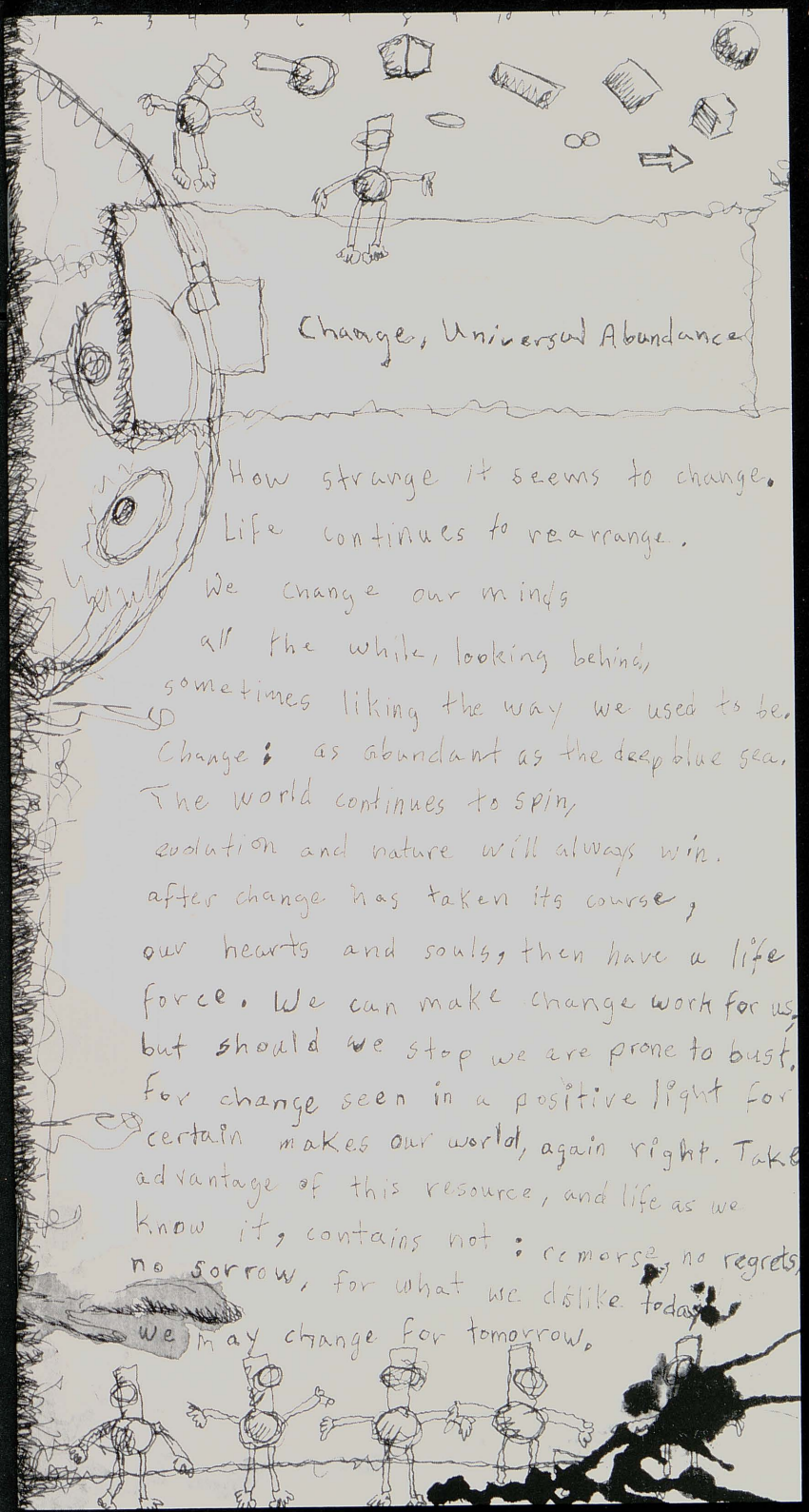
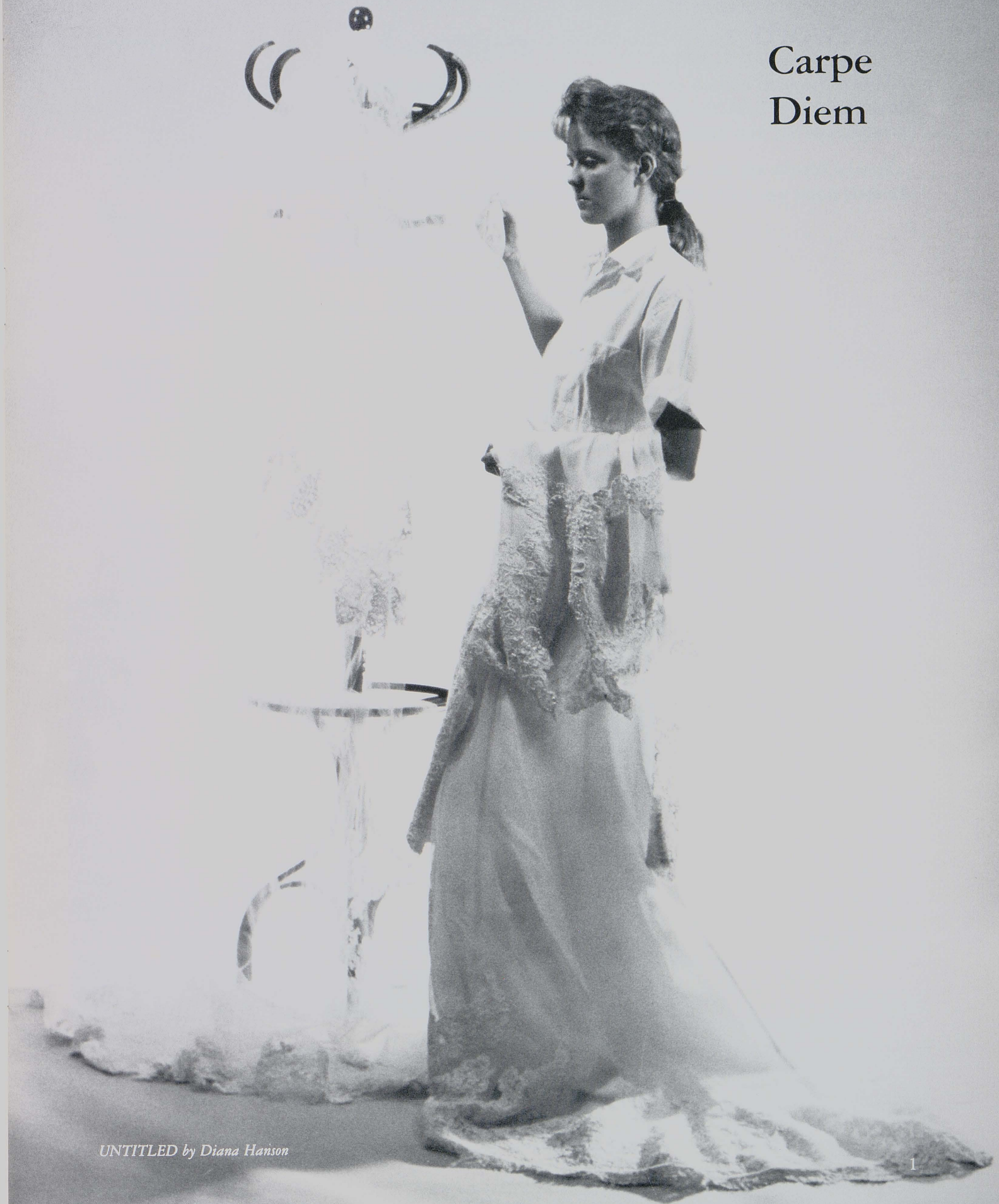
TJC Touchstone

Spring 1991



Carpe Diem



UNTITLED by Diana Hanson

Foreword

This is the sixth edition of the *TJC Touchstone.* Our theme this year is Carpe Diem, a Latin phrase meaning "seize the day." This theme has not only presented a topical challenge to entrants, but has also become a personal creed to many.

Special thanks are in order to all people involved with the magazine in every facet. We sincerely hope you enjoy this result of much hard work.

G. Paul Ray
Editor-in-chief

UNTITLED by Shawn E. Taylor

This edition of *TJC Touchstone* is printed on recycled paper.

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Tyler Junior College
Spring, 1991

About the title:

A distinctive streak left on a black touchstone when rubbed with genuine silver or gold was a foolproof test which allowed ancient civilizations to trust using coins in trade. We trust that you, too, will find genuine distinctive elements of value in the *TJC Touchstone*.

Carolyn Hendon
March 1986

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Carpe Diem

with apologies to Edgar Allan Poe

by Larry Keck

Looking neither left nor right
on an errand of importance,
hurrying I felt the impact,
of the message
carpe diem.

Making haste I scurried hither
there and yon I bustled madly
trying to avoid the pitfalls
still I quested
carpe diem.

Suddenly on the horizon
sign of neon gas so noble
wildly flapping arms I bounded
to the counter
carpe diem.

Give me what I seek and need
said I to the girl so willing
to fulfill my desperate want
of the evening
carpe diem.

Sorry sir, she said and blushed
but you have no reservation
have you tried the Avis counter
I hear they have
carpe diem.

Perspective

by Evelyn L. Tomlin

Creeping shadows whisper me awake.
I lie still
to view
what I must do
today.
Life-cares threaten,
goading me to reach beyond my strength,
to labor in the future.

I fear.
Will I become a broken pitcher at the fountain,
A cistern's broken wheel?
A useless carrier,
blinded to the needs of others?

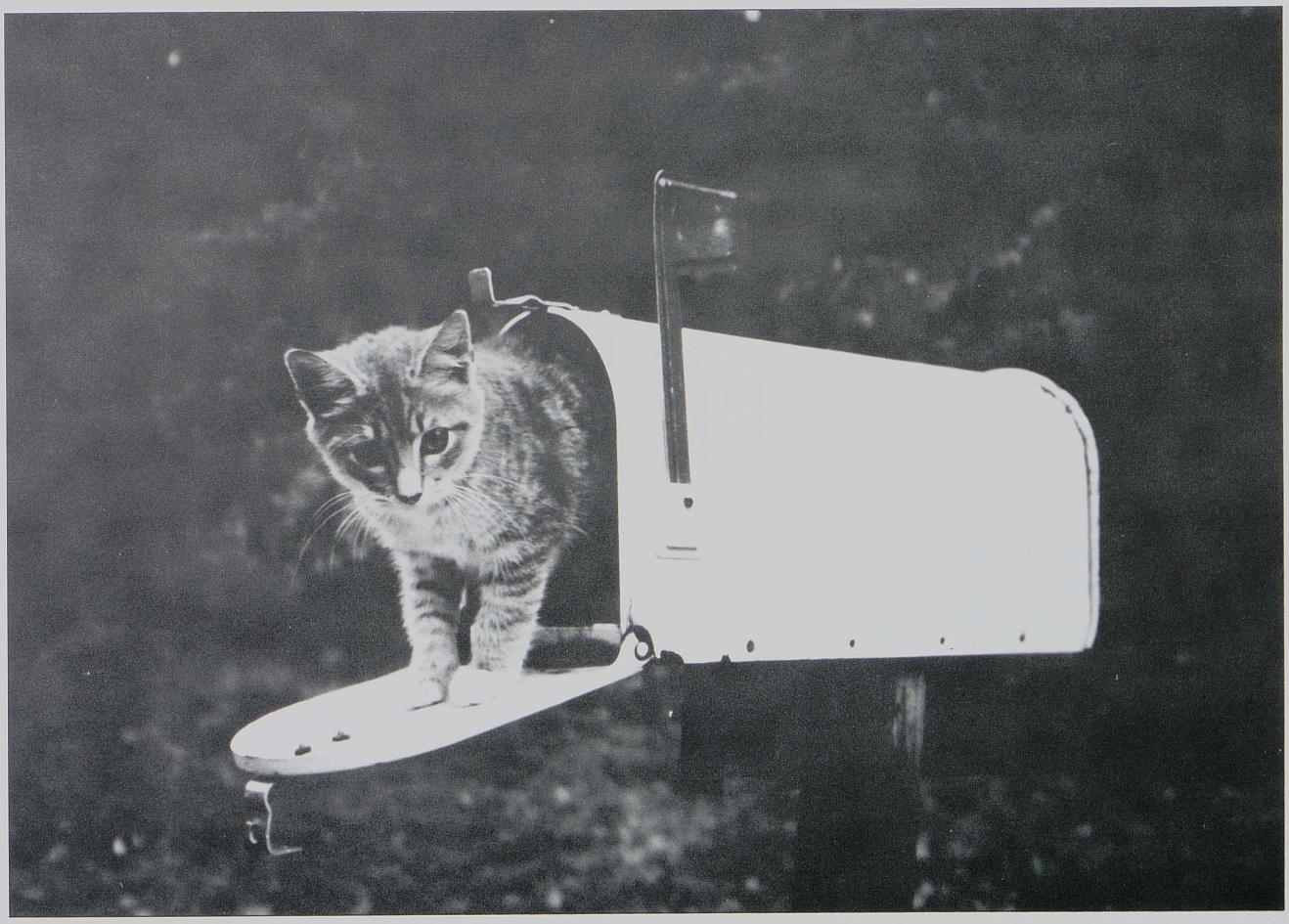
Quiet, my soul!
Tomorrow is not in my care.
I must not fret for what I cannot do . . .

Fingers of light
point the sun to my door,
to light my way—
Today.

Good Poets Watch What They Do

by Bruce Nelson

Seurat the cat
Sits by the basin and
Watches with narrowed prisms,
Watches my lathered razor
Give back to the drain
Thousands of black points.
He purrs
While it occurs
To me
These are shavings of myself—
Points to be pondered.
But the mirror shows poetry has
Made me cut myself again.
God, I'm glad I don't make my living doing this.
I slap at the cat.
His name is really Ned.
And he's not supposed to be up on the counter.
Where's the toilette paper?



C.O.D. by Amy Michelle Evans

My Turn

by Jan Adams

I'm not selfish,
It's just my turn.

I haven't changed,
It's just my turn.

My mind rages,
It's just my turn.

Please understand,
It's just . . . my turn.

Observation

by Gloria A. Davis

A small sailboat
I cannot master the mighty wind
and so I stay within my pool,
and watch the battleship go out
upon the waves stirred by storm
and roll and pitch and win.

A mere child
I cannot act upon the stage,
and so I stay within my box
and watch the actors go out
upon the stage furnished with props
and strut and fret and gain applause.

A quiet soul
I close myself inside myself
and write. I pour out my
knowledge, my feelings, my pictures
on the paper for all to read and
wonder
How does this person know of life.

JOY by Annliese Roemer

Balance

by Rick Diamond

We lie on his muddy green sandbox,
our eyes squint up at white soft clouds;
sharp, strong, they hover, look back at us,
my little son beside me. He is
like a rock, confident—or a dog,
maybe—relaxed, enthused. He plays.

Sometimes, though, I correct him. If
he didn't know, his blue eyes widen.
Hard grown-up love can cut him, change his
movements. He'll cry, his soft face red,
dark, hot. Not until later will his back
let go. His arms and legs afraid,

surprised, he'll carefully let me hug
him, change the subject.
Balanced now
atop this plastic frog-shaped sandbox,
watching clouds, I fear we could
fall upwards, swing out into blue
chaos, unrest—but then the pull,
pull under hugs us safe, for now.
I kiss his elbow and we laugh.

One Meaningful Day

by Nicole Erin Brooks

One century spent in a classroom,
One decade lived as a teenager,
Nine months needed to produce new lives,
And still one day not lived.

Knowledge obtained by the hour,
Maturity reached by the minute,
New lives produced by the second,
And still one day not lived.

The most important one—pushed aside by many.
The day each man defines his goal.
Only after that day does he cease to merely live—
He lives to accomplish that goal.

Facing Pain and Love

by Rick Diamond

My dear little son,

I'm not sure what to say; I'm still a bit hazy about what happened, but I want somehow to tell you how scared I was today and that my love for you is the most powerful and redeeming force I have ever known.

You fell today and chipped your tooth.

I've been replaying that moment all the rest of this afternoon and evening, and now it's just before midnight. I keep seeing and hearing you hitting the concrete face down, the sound it made and you crying—not hard, really—you were crawling behind Bill on a wet bench in the park near where the concrete dolphin sprays water on gravel and wooden benches and kids come on hot days like today and jump around in the cool mist. I hear the crunching of the pea-gravel under your feet, and then I see you climb up on the dark wet wooden slats of the bench where Bill is sitting and talking about his sales projections for this quarter and the woman he's going out with later this weekend. And you're just playing and minding your own business, and I turn to talk to your Momma, and then you fall. Just like that.

You could have fallen on broken glass, which is all over the stage that you had just been playing on and that we had just had to steer you away from.

You could have landed harder, and broken more teeth, or put out an eye, or cracked your head open, or broken an arm or a leg.

I suppose you could have fallen at some skewed angle and broken your neck and been paralyzed. Or you could have died.

As it was, you fell, face down, face first, I think, although I'd like for my own comfort to imagine that your little hands hit the concrete sidewalk just a second before your face did. I turned and saw you there and picked you up.

I checked you over for damage, as I have so many times before. And I saw some blood in your mouth and on your lips. And something else was in your mouth—a rock, maybe?—along with dirt and pieces of wet leaves.

Your Momma stepped over and stroked your head. She asked if you were all right, and said, "Oh, it's okay—that must have hurt."

Bill was saying, "Hey, it's no big deal, Bud—shrug it off. You're fine."

Bill, it's true, doesn't have a child. I didn't understand until you were born that the world is divided into those folks who have children and those who do not. I think Bill, still a bachelor and a rake and a kid, does not understand how it is to love someone more than you love yourself—differently than you love yourself, perhaps—and how is such a thing possible, anyway? I'm not sure. But I know that it is so. I love Bill; he was my best friend in school. But we are different now, and have been, really, since before you were born. I see myself loving you so much that I have willingly and purposely altered my life and have changed the parts of myself that I feed and nurture. You and your beautiful mother are supremely important to me. Everything that I am is in relation to you.

All this over a chipped tooth?

I noticed it, as everyone was asking what had happened, each in his or her way.

Your tooth was chipped, at the bottom. A little white sliver of tooth had been knocked off, and there it lay, on your tongue.

I fished it out, along with the leaves and dirt.

And immediately Momma and I began to worry (I know she did because we talked about it after we had tucked you under your Sesame Street covers and kissed your soft forehead). What if your smile is crooked? What if you have a bad experience and hate dentists forever because we have to have a dead tooth pulled? What if—

Your face looks different.

It doesn't matter, of course—

But it hit me.

I just don't ever want to lose you.

I don't want you to die.

It's something I think about, in passing, probably every day or so. We live in a violent, dangerous world, full of disaster and death and disease and anger.

There is always the risk of that one moment, fast and full and then gone, in which someone lets go of a little wrist, and a little someone falls or gets lost in the crowd of tall strangers or hits his head against a stone or has his feelings hurt or chips his tooth.

I was powerless to help you. You just suddenly had fallen.

All night long, as I've remembered it and looked at it, there on your tongue among the leaves and dirt, I've felt cold.

Very soon you had stopped crying and wanted to go back and play on the stage where the broken glass is. You were telling us your jokes and singing your little songs and laughing. You were okay. You are asleep now, peaceful. Your tooth is not loose our neighbor the dental hygienist says your tooth will be fine. Your mother is asleep in our bed.

She is six weeks pregnant.

She was pregnant five months ago, but we had a miscarriage.

Bill asked if there was something wrong with her.

This baby is a gamble.

As you all obviously are.

You are so wonderfully precious to me that I want to protect you—and keep you safe—because the power of the love I feel for you frightens me.

But I am more alive at this moment than I think I have ever been. I am so grateful for you and your Momma and this new baby. I decided a few years ago to stay at home in the evenings and talk to my wife and play with my baby son, rather than go out with Bill. It was a sacrifice. It even made me mad at your mother once or twice—even when it had been my decision.

Now these few years have gone by and I have you to hold. I can look into your blue-green eyes and stroke your red hair while you tell me all about Jack and the beanstalk.

It is the sweetest struggle, my little miracle, my piece of God.

The Hands of Time

by Katrina Y'vette Miller

Often I long to turn back the hands of time,
Worries were far from my mind and a fairytale
was around every corner;

Often I long to turn back the hands of time,
Loved ones that are gone now were here with me then
and death had no meaning to me;

As each second passes I am further away from that day,
As each second passes I am worried about the next;

Often I long to turn back the hands of time.

Lemonade World

by Sherry Potter

A lemonade world exists.
Somewhere in time persists,
A place where roses live and
Candy-colored lollipops sing.
No doper's road or vagabond's woe.
Sweetness permeates the air,
With innocent prayers.
No motherless, addicted child,
Or satan that blatantly smiled.
Just a lemonade time
Lost in the catacombs of an aged mind.

Kids sold lemonade, ten-cents a glass.
Pushers didn't push no crack.
Daffodils danced,
while teddybears pranced.
Children knew not of abuse,
from twisted minds of little excuse.
No homeless cries
From streetpeople's sighs.
Lost in time and space,
Exists a sweet lemonade place.

Falina Frog in Love

—A Fantasy—

by Merrill O. Cantrell

Falina Frog's eyes bulged and flashed with anger. It was always this way during her nesting period. Her beautiful green body trapped in a slimy brown mud nest for a week, while she fed the young frogs and taught them how to catch their food.

She did it all for the first two days. She gave each small insect she caught to a baby, teaching it to curl its little tongue and hold on until the bug was inside its mouth and the mouth closed tight.

Soon, by watching her, they learned to feed themselves. They could reach out and grab the smaller slow gnats. When their skill enabled them to catch a full-grown high-speed mosquito she nudged them out of the nest to fend for themselves.

Now Falina Frog was a well-adjusted female. Her mothering instincts were in place. She loved feeding and teaching the children. The thing that caused her anger at this time was the age-old battle of the sexes.

She stayed in a mud nest for a solid week with nothing but squeaking children, while Frederick Frog, her mate, would sleep in his mud nest all day long, then calmly hop out at dusk and go splashing into Pennypacker's pond. Then he would cruise down the lake and flirt with every maiden female on a lily pad. Though she was certain it was harmless flirtation, that did little to ease her aggravation. He had freedom. She didn't.

One evening, not more than an hour after Freddie left, Falina pushed the last of her little ones out of the nest with a sigh. She stretched and rolled over completely in her nest to awaken muscles stiff from a week's idleness. Then

after several short hops around on the bank, she plunged into the pond and swam aerobically to the other side.

She came out glistening and clean, not a speck of mud on her little shapely body. She looked around for Freddie, but did not see him anywhere. He was 150 yards down the pond, lolling on a lily pad, feeding flies to a young female.

Falina dove back into the pond, swimming under water for a long time. She rolled horizontally and flipped head over heels, thoroughly enjoying her freedom of movement. She came up in the center of the pond and slithered onto a large lily pad and stretched to her full length.

She was about to drop the lids over her dainty little protruding eyes, when the largest bullfrog she had ever seen jumped onto the lily pad in front of her. She snapped to a sitting position. She was amazed by the size of his huge muscles still dripping with water. He must have been down there watching her play all the time.

Without giving her time to recover from her shock and run away, the giant immediately burst into the frog's mating call in a deep basso profundo voice, the low notes figuratively scraping the bottom of the pond. She was facing him when the call began, so the law of the pond required her to respond. Her only hope to escape this ugly, grey-green monster with the liver colored spots was to sing loud enough to attract all the males in the pond.

With this thought in mind, she opened her little pointed mouth, and burst forth into a mellow alto love song that swelled out over the pond and brought a half dozen young males to her rescue. Two each—baritones, second tenors—and first tenors, spread out on lily pads to either side of the giant facing her.

The whole body of the gray-green giant throbbed and the soft skin over his throat swelled out like a balloon with each note. This time all the others had joined him in a septet of four-part harmony. The beauty of the whole made it impossible for her to pick the most acceptable individual right away. She must sing again.

This time her song was even more beautiful than before and seven pairs of bulging, hungry, multi-faceted eyes ogled her. They saw a small pointed head with yellow-green eyes protruding on top, shining in the moonlight like small jewels. A sleek medium green body with black spots that looked like polished black onyx, and oh, those gorgeous long legs tapering to a tiny ankle.

The big ugly bass thought, "There's a girl that could almost keep up with me in speed hopping and swimming!" Little did he know because of her light weight she could jump three inches farther than him and because of her slim body could swim ten inches per minute faster.

Far down the lake, when her second verse began, Freddie recognized her voice and, without a goodbye, threw himself into the pond and swam as he had never swum before. He had covered only half the distance when her second verse ended and the men began to sing again. He felt lost, sure that she would choose one of them after this verse.

She knew she must have the strength to sing another complete verse or that big ugly giant would become aggressive and take her. She burst forth vigorously but subsided to a slower cadence to preserve her breath. If she failed to finish the verse, she would lose her right to choose.

As she held the last note for four extra beats, they knew they must sing again before one of them got her. Halfway through their verse another voice joined the septet from behind her. She couldn't believe her ears. The voice was unmistakable, even if it hadn't run chills down her spine all the way to her little webbed feet. Freddie was here!

The last note ended. Falina whirled and leapt in one movement to the pad where Freddie sat gasping for breath. She brushed his cheek as she landed and immediately hopped onto the next pad. She wanted to get as far away from that ugly gray-green frog as she could. Her touch gave Freddie new life to turn and follow her from pad to pad until they reached their former nesting grounds.

After they rested a while, she slipped into water and swam in a little circle laying her eggs in the water. Then she came back to the pad. He swam around the same circle and fertilized the eggs. As he climbed back on to the pad a huge juicy dragonfly came humming by.

She wanted it. Before she could get her mouth open, Freddie had zapped the big bug and held it down in front of her with his long red tongue. She licked her little tongue out, but before taking the bug, she curled it around his and squeezed. He was expecting, hoping for that, but it still sent chill lumps all over his smooth frogskin.

Falina took the bug from him and he repaid her in kind, but only lightly and quickly removed his tongue so she could enjoy her very favorite delicacy.

He thought, "She knows I flirt so she will never believe she is the only frog I have ever mated."

She thought, "He always gives me the juicy dragonflies, while he takes the hard-shelled beetles. I must remember not to get so angry at my next nesting."

It takes a week for the eggs to hatch. From thousands of eggs only 200 or so will survive to become tadpoles. After two more weeks a dozen of them will grow legs and shed their tails to become baby frogs. These will go into the nest with their mother to learn to live as frogs. Perhaps three of these will

survive to become adult frogs and share the lifestyle of their mother and father.

Falina will have no responsibilities for three weeks. She has mated so there will be no more love challenges. She and Freddie can hop in the lush green grass on the shore, roll in the soft cozy mud by the water, swim to their hearts delight or simply lie on a lily pad, moonbathe and eat dragonflies.

It is almost like a three week honeymoon and three weeks can be a long, long time in the life span of a frog . . .

In the Gray Area

by G. Paul Ray

Sunburnt beaches and snowcapped peaks
within a moment's notice
have told us
that we should listen when the heart speaks.
We've found the fallacy of the future and
no promise in the past.
You've taught me, at last,
to follow where you lead me by the hand.
Should ever another become the Intruder
by the words he has said
or the thoughts in his head,
it is because he can't fathom:
wir sind Brüder.
We are Brothers

Laura

by Kelly Tarkington

I know of a free spirit whose eyes behold a glittering sky,
And whose soul communes with the vermillion sunset.
She is one with the fragrance of the dawn,
And the flavor of the flowers.
The brilliance of her counsel mingles with the laughter in my eyes
And serves as a lantern as I search
The black confines of my cluttered mind,
For my own truth.
She has taught me that to fear is to die,
And that truth is freedom,
And that I should immerse my being in a pool of lucid happiness,
And bathe in all that I am.

DRESSED FOR THE DANCE by Gayle Herr Farwell

Untitled

by Kimberly Diana Allen

Young Child,
Keep your dreams!
Don't throw them all away.
These times will pass again . . .
hold on to Someday.
Your will is taken wrong
by those who do not know.
You hold the sky inside.
Don't let them take that soul!

Cry Child, and let it out—
let misery run free.
Give me your empty shell . . .
I'll hold it tenderly.
Our kind runs not here . . .
Steps are not the same.
We open up to purest love
by opening more to pain.

Young Child,
Stay ahead, or if,
instead, behind.
Beware of modern men
Caught in the trap of time.
I knew
your feelings once
At one point I was free . . .
Trust me,
don't give them up.
Go after your dreams.

. . . Do not question, Do not curse,
Do not impose your will.
Do not wait; but go, instead.
There's magic out there . . . still.

Carpe Diem

by Gene Boyda

My car is on E,
my bills are due.
Seize the moment
before it seizes you.

Exit

by Daniel P. Hammond

Smoke, gone before it's there,
Wakes him
From his thoughtless stare.

The room, filled with countless victims,
Holds the night,
In senseless prison.

But something silent
Behind the noise
Calls to him tonight.

The boy in him, remembering the sun,
Has always set
When the workday's done.

And memories, of youthful hope,
Blow away
With the day's last smoke.

But something silent
Behind the noise
Calls to him tonight.

Yesterday's insatiable vision,
Drowns
In liquid self-derision;

As he looks, around the room again,
At all
His cynical, nightly friends.

But something silent
Behind the noise
Calls to him tonight.

A waitress, staring without feeling,
Counts the stars
Through the ancient ceiling;

But tonight, at eight o'clock,
He leaves his half-full beer,
And feels a genuine smile . . .
As he gets up from his chair.

Metz Journal Entry: June 16, 1990
A Day in the French Wine Country

by Judy Turman

When I was a junior at Robert E. Lee High School, my English teacher, Miss Marsh, assigned a theme on what for me was a very difficult topic: "My Perfect Day." I struggled for days with that paper before finally piecing together several red-letter events from my past 17 years to come up with one ideal day. If I were to write that theme now, however, I would have no problem writing about one single perfect day, for today I had one.

It began at 7:45 this morning with the arrival of Marie Niedziocka, my new Metz friend whom I met at the Sister Cities tea held by Metz city officials for the Tyler delegation when we arrived two weeks ago. I had just walked out of the dorm and noted that it was going to be a beautiful day when I spotted Marie in her little white Peugeot, prompt as always, waiting for me in the parking lot. As I piled in beside her, I noticed two additions to our ever-present dictionary and notepad: a map and a guidebook for Alsace-Lorraine.

Marie, whose English is much better than my French, told me we were going to Alsace to tour Route Du Vin, the wine country. As we drove in the early morning stillness past fields red with poppies, dewy meadows with black and white cows already grazing and tiny farmhouses with geraniums bursting forth at every conceivable angle, I began to experience a new appreciation for the French countryside. True, it wasn't the stately, awe-inspiring grandeur of the mountains of Switzerland. Still, the gently rolling hills, flower-bedecked farmhouses and general air of pastoral serenity found in this northeastern portion of France had their own charm. When Marie informed me, "The better is after," I wondered how the scenery could improve. But it did.

Marie had to consult her map frequently, for she, too, was on unfamiliar ground. Once we stopped for directions at a gas station whose blue pumps were topped with huge planters of red geraniums. Shortly afterward we turned off the main highway onto a narrow road lined with poplars straight out of Monet. Fields of poppies—"champs de coquilicots," Marie told me— dotted the landscape on either side. Gradually, tiny ancient villages with brown and white half-timbered stores and houses—"les maisons avec colombage," according to Marie—began to appear. Cobblestone streets and gardens of geraniums and roses separated the houses.

Beyond them lay sloping green hills planted in endless rows of vertical vines; we were in the wine country. The hills grew steeper, the vistas more dramatic as we threaded our way through towns whose storybook appearances matched their storybook names: Scherwiller, Chatenois, St. Hippolyte, Rorschwihr and Bircheim, to name just a few. We stopped a couple of times to eat and twice to sample the wine, but mostly we drove, savoring our shared joy at the incredible landscapes, which, as Marie had promised, grew more and more beautiful.

Marie had indeed saved the best for last. I knew as we drove past the sign "Riquewihr—One of the most beautiful villages in France" that this was going to be good. We parked and walked until we came to a tall medieval tower set astride a stone arch.

We walked through the archway and into another world. Narrow cobblestone streets, perfectly resored rows of half-timbered houses, replete, of course, with geraniums, children in native dress and strolling minstrels came into view. Not even the hordes of captivated tourists who seemed strange transplants from another planet could diminish the effect. Enchanted, Marie and I strolled through ancient passageways, visited a tiny museum at the top of two incredibly steep flights of wooden stairs, chatted with an artist in his studio and found the perfect French doll for my daughter Jennifer. Time passed much too quickly, and all too soon it was time to turn back to the more mundane world of Metz.

We drove mostly in silence, still absorbed with our reactions to what we'd seen and experienced. As we drove, I thought of Miss Marsh and wished that she were still alive so I could share with her my newfound knowledge of what constitutes a perfect day.

The Flight of the Free Spirit

by Catherine L. Starkey

The delightful world of the adolescent is also a world of fantasies which clouds the young mind in a sphere of isolation. On her magic carpet she daydreams of the seductive prom gown, the first dance with the ace-jock, the diminutive bikini and the gathering of admirers, as she prolongs phone calls and shares secret secrets.

Her wheel of emotions spins from ostentatious to self-conscious, from vanity to mudpacks, from super-ego to puberty blues, from candid to wily, from nonchalant to embarrassed from complex to natural.

While she participates in this stage for which we have not found a cure, but which we do recall ourselves, advisedly we caution the teen to devour every memory and savor every minute because once she closes the door, she can never return again.

UNTITLED by Diana Hanson

The Date

by Terresa Arnold

In the mind of each woman lives her dream date. The fantasy of the perfect man, car, restaurant and evening kiss is one that develops over the years of puberty. They are moments that we anticipate as the high points of our lives and we just know we will want to hold on to them forever. I thought, "When I get to that moment, that hour, I'll really be living!" The only thing I forgot was reality. Fantasy and reality are never the same. The fantasy of my first date far exceeded, by light years, the true reality of it.

The fantasy escort I had pictured was a mix of Mel Gibson's blue eyes, Kurt Russell's sandy blond hair, Sylvester Stallone's strong body and Tom Cruise's face and smile. He would always dress appropriately and look good in anything he wore.

My real escort, however, was a totally different experience. At seven o'clock, he knocked on the door and walked in the foyer of the house. At precisely the same moment, I started my descent of the stairs. There I stood in my best dress, high heels and extravagant hair style. My escort had on blue jeans, cowboy boots, an old flannel shirt and a beat-up 10-gallon hat. His hair looked liked it had been soaked in axle grease and was a blah, mousey brown. I really couldn't tell what color his eyes were, because he wore glasses that were as thick as Coke bottles. He had a body that could have been reincarnation of Olive Oyl and the excitement of impending sex had his face broken out with acne. This person was not exactly what I had in mind.

My fantasy car just happened to be the hottest car in the world at this particular time. A 1970 candy apple red Chevrolet Malibu SS, with black pin stripes and a front-hood scoop. This type of car could be considered worthy of Agent 007.

Reality set in, however, when I stepped out the front door. There it sat, in all of its glory, the truck from hell—a 1964 drab olive green Dodge pick-up truck. The back window was missing and the rust covering the body looked like a fungus continuing to grow. To top it all off, a bumper sticker saying "EAT MORE POSSUM!" was the only thing securing the license plate.

When fantasizing about the restaurant for the dream date, it is usually very high priced and extremely elegant. The lighting is romantic. There is a gorgeous flower arrangement on the table and the waiters take care of every need imaginable.

Unfortunately, reality once again reared its ugly head. Lo and behold, the truck pulls into the driveway of a family owned restaurant named Big Mama's Chicken and Ribs. Don't get me wrong, I enjoy chicken and ribs as much as the next person, but this particular establishment did not have the ambiance I was expecting. The lighting was harsh and bright. The flower arrangement consisted of one flower that had only three petals left on it. The color of the flower had faded from a bright red to a pitiful pink. The waiter was Big Mama who just happened to be a six foot, 300 pound man. He wore an apron that had not been washed in ages and smoked a foot-long stogie. He took our order, brought the food and was never heard from again.

The most important part of the fantasy date is the evening kiss. When I dreamed of this moment, it was under a full moon, with a soft breeze blowing and millions of stars sparkling in the sky. On the front porch of my house, he—my fantasy man—would take me in his strong arms and very tenderly kiss me.

Reality, however, was not the same at all. As we got out of the truck, the dark clouded sky dropped rain blobs the size of baseballs. Lightning streaked across the darkness, illuminating the look of anticipation on my escort's face. As we reached the front porch, he clutched me in his arms and, in the process, stepped on my foot. After I stopped howling in pain, my escort tried once again to impart upon me his goodnight kiss. Once he figured out what to do with his nose, he kissed me. Unfortunately for me, however, his braces got stuck to my upper lip and ripped a hunk of lip off with them.

I suppose I could say the whole evening was a disaster, but it wasn't. When we anticipate these high points in our lives, they never turn out quite the way they are planned. However, disappointments teach us to live on and enjoy the moment, regardless of the situation. Fantasies fade in the memory, like the colors of a disappearing rainbow. Reality, in all its many shapes and colors, can sometimes turn into a fantasy come true.

Sacred Wedding

by Ana Carson

The morning shower pours
clean fragrances.
Blended beneath
lavender soap
our lustrous skin
resists bouncing
water needles
dropping away the strings
of hazelnuts tucked
by sleep in our necks
as
our open eyes,
closed still to
the water vapor,
see the glass doors
fade away slowly
until our hands
meet to exchange
the chamomile shampoo
twice
and we begin the song,
the circular roar
of hands and hair:
our first parallel
stretch of morn with
a shaky laziness to wed the day.

Ocean of Love

by Lori R. Hansen

It begins as a trickle, a sunny touch melting the hard, cold iceberg of the heart.

Soon the drops form a puddle that erodes the walls of protection that have been erected long ago. Slowly, grain by grain, the fresh water clears a path to freedom.

The little stream with its new freedom courses through the land erasing ugliness and death; restoring beauty and life to all that it touches. It is cutting a wider path, gathering strength as it goes, there is no stopping it now.

At times, the stream is hidden from human eyes, but it is heard still. Its singing current full of new life will not be muffled.

And finally, after its persistent trek, the stream flows into the vast expanse of the ocean. United with the ocean, the once tiny stream now has unmeasurable power.

This mighty force can seem frightening as it crashes against your fortress. But allow love to begin as a gentle, steady trickle and carve an ocean into your heart.

Marching On To War

by Elizabeth Ely

1969, AUSTIN, TEXAS

I was a nice, sweet, quiet, naive young woman, a newlywed. Transferring from Baylor University after my sophomore year, I was continuing my pursuit of a degree in elementary education at the University of Texas at Austin.

It was a year of illness, of loneliness and mostly of fear. Becoming a wife, my major goal in life, brought many transitions for me. I felt like I had been buried in a hole all of my life. Along with education courses, I was taking Real Life 101.

This was a year of great social change and awareness. I would be walking to class on the huge campus and would literally be pushed off of the sidewalk by Vietnam demonstrators. Students wore black arm bands, signifying their protest against the war. On designated days large numbers of the student body would skip class, standing outside the door of the classrooms, yelling protest slogans, trying to disrupt the classes. I complained to the student sitting next to me, "Some of us are here to get an education. Why can't they leave us alone?"

My husband, although in the Air Force ROTC, wanted to participate in an organized march downtown. Not only did I not want to march, I did not want him to. I was scared. What if the crowd got out of hand? What if he was injured or arrested? What about his patriotism? Aren't we supposed to support our country? Aren't we supposed to trust our government to make the right decisions? Don't the politicians and our President know what is the right thing to do? We should have faith and not express unpatriotic feelings and thoughts. I convinced him not to march.

Not only were people protesting the war, but women were protesting their fate in our society. Bras were being burned. Women were speaking out against the injustices, lack of equal treatment and pay. I was threatened. Watching them on the news in our small apartment I would say, "Don't you know we have it good? Men take care of us, the way it should be. Don't rock the boat for me!" I hoped this was a phase that would pass quickly. I hoped my husband would not hear too much about it. After all, he might start expecting me to work, even if I didn't want to!

My husband graduated and entered the Air Force. We decided this was a good time to start our family. After all, I could always continue my education later. After initial training, we moved back to Austin, stationed at Bergstrom Air Force Base. Both daughters were born in Austin.

About six months after my second daughter was born, I became very depressed. I had accomplished my life goals of becoming a wife and mother. I spent my days alone with two young children, who were often sick. My outings were to the base hospital, for treatment for one of my daughters or for myself. Leaving the girls with their father while I went to the grocery store became a treat. I would linger in the aisles, savoring the quiet and lack of demands on my time and attention. If this was all there was to life, you could have it.

At the insistence of one of the base physicians, I started seeing a psychologist. I learned I was a person with rights, with feelings, with interests, with talents, with a MIND. Not only was it all right to respect myself, it was imperative for my health and happiness. He challenged my whole way of thinking, my whole world. At the age of 26, I was being born: discovering my mind, my feelings, discovering ME.

1991, AUSTIN, TEXAS

I moved from Austin shortly after that, living in various cities in Texas throughout the years. I go back to visit, to attend conferences, to vacation in the area. Each time I go back I have strong feelings of nostalgia. No other town feels like home to me like Austin, not even my hometown. I have driven by the small apartment I lived in as a newlywed, where I convinced my husband not to march and where I saw the beginning of the women's movement on my small black-and-white television. Although far from fancy then, it now shows signs of neglect with large cracks in the dirty grey bricks, unpainted shutters and holes in the asphalt parking lot.

It represents a different era. It seems like a whole lifetime away. Maybe it is.

Who am I now, as compared to then? Well, maybe I am still nice, sweet and quiet. But, I doubt if anyone would now describe me as naive or young. I consider myself a feminist and readily express my views toward the liberation of women and men. I work for the rights of all people to express their true nature, discarding rigid roles and stereotypes. But most importantly, I now work for peace. I believe that is why I am here on earth: to promote peaceful, cooperative understanding and

awareness among individuals and nations.

I returned to Austin in January, on the eve of threat of our nation once again being in war. Our leaders have publicly declared the starting date of military action in the Middle East. I again felt fear, confusion and anxiety, just as I did in 1969. But this time I am very clear about my responsibility as a citizen. I no longer feel I must sit back quietly, patriotically and passively accepting whatever our national leaders dictate. I feel very strongly that I must express my views let our politicians know my views and do whatever I can to encourage peaceful resolution of the world's problems.

When I left home I told my husband and daughter when they could expect me to be home, adding the statement, "unless I am detained from marching in a peace rally." My 17-year-old rolled her eyes; my husband gave me a knowing hug. I did not know if there was going to be such a rally, but I knew if there was one, I would be there.

I was not disappointed. A Martin Luther King peace rally was scheduled to begin late Tuesday afternoon, one day before the bombing was to start. I called my husband to tell him I would be home later than planned, that I would be marching.

How ironic. Here I was back in Austin, the city I consider to be the city of my birth. I was having a chance to finally publicly declare my values: to declare that was is not okay, that war is not the way to solve problems. I chanted with the others, as loud as my voice would let me. As we marched across an overbridge of Interstate 35, we delayed several lanes of traffic on the access roads. Some people honked, appearing to be angry with the delay in their busy schedules. Yet tears rolled down my cheeks as I saw people rolling down their windows to respond with their fingers in a "V" for peace, mirroring my own arm and hand. Men and women in their nice cars, business outfits and nicely styled hair were also expressing their desire for a kinder, more gentle nation.

It grieved me that another war was imminent. But, I was thankful that I now have the guts to express what I believe is right, what I KNOW in my heart is right. I must publicly declare that I do not want men and women to die, to be disabled, to be psychologically scarred. We are no longer living in the days of cowboys and Indians. The John Waynes of the world cannot shoot the bad guys with their rifles, declare themselves winners and the world go on. This day of advanced technology means war games can destroy the world, the earth. There are no victors. We MUST find other ways to settle differences and disputes.

January 17, 1991

Now that the war in no longer just a threat and a fear but a reality, my work has just begun. As I heard the news that the bombing had started, my heart ached. My 19-year-old daughter commented on how all of her life she has heard people say they will always remember where they were when they learned of the death of President Kennedy. She will always remember the moment she learned the war had officially begun.

I pulled out the metal bracelet that I wore in the 70s, with the name of a young MIA and his date of capture. I once again placed it on my arm to make the statement that we must not forget the PEOPLE who are destroyed by war.

My never-ending hope is that someday we will all be born to the idea of love and protection for humankind and for our earth.

BROKEN LINES by Amy Michelle Evans

It Is Not Now

by G. Paul Ray

I do not want to die
in your hands
breathing the sands
of unknown lands
and look in your eyes
and realize
that I am dying.
Of course, I would be lying
to say I want to die.
Many have died for you and me,
perhaps it is just that we
take our turn at war
dying for those who've
gone before.
But that day is another;
it is not now, my Brother.
Today we may live our lives
and love our wives
and love each other.
And know what it is like
not to die.
But when that day arrives
and we must leave our wives,
and it's our turn to die.
I want to die in your arms
to comfort the harms
and look in your eyes
to say our goodbyes
and now that I am going to die.

—En—

by Dee Ann Watson

ENgulfed in the voice
heard only in the wind
whispering all the secrets
told o'er all the years.

ENtangled in the future
not waiting for the past
playing life by ear
going much too fast.

ENtitled to an opinion
given a proper chance
to prove yourself deserving
in all ways of the word.

ENriched with your courage
to face one and all
after failing them once
only to try them again.

Star-Spangled Pride

by Nancy Bass

It was another hot, muggy day in the Bayou State as we entered the main gate of America's largest Strategic Air Command base. Airmen drove slowly through the checkpoint as civilians waited impatiently in the scorching sun for clearance. Security was tight at the Eighth Air Force Headquarters and for good reason. Saddam Hussein held the world's attention in the Persian Gulf as America awaited his next move. It seemed an eternity before we were finally cleared and on our way to see Major Ted Riser. As we drove through tree-lined streets of pastel colored houses, I thought of Ted. How I missed him; I could hardly wait to find the yellow headquarters building he had called home for two years.

"It's about time ya'll showed up," Ted yelled with a smile as Ryan and Allison ran to greet him. "I was worried you might change your mind," he said softly as he held me close. "I've waited so long to hold you again," he whispered as his lips brushed lightly by my ear. I had forgotten how handsome he looked in uniform. It felt good to be held tightly and feel the special warmth that comes from being loved. How easy it had been to fall in love with him in the few months since we first met at the university.

"Let's get out of here," Ted said hurriedly. "I have a flight line clearance and only four short hours to spend with ya'll." How proud he seemed to have us there. I realized the time we were spending together was very precious to him.

Security was everywhere! Colored lines and ropes crisscrossed the floor dictating where we were allowed to walk. "No crossing the red line," stressed Ted. "We're not cleared for that area." "I wish I could take pictures," Allison stated flatly, "my friends will never believe any of this."

As we entered the hanger door, the immenseness of the KC-135 was overwhelming. Silver streaks glistened like stars as the sun's rays bounced off the wings. The official SAC emblem stood out against the slick, silver shell of the plane. Flight crews scurried around overhauling engines, tightening bolts and checking tires. These planes had to be ready to defend our country at a moment's notice.

Ryan and Allison shrieked with delight as Ted said, "Let's climb up." "You mean we have clearance to go aboard this plane?" I asked, for I could hardly believe my ears. Ted jokingly said, "What are majors for anyway! Let's go!" Ted carefully guided us through the different sections of the plane, from the boom section in the tail to the cockpit. He patiently answered questions from Ryan and Allison and explained how different instruments worked. "Hey, kids, would you like to sit in the pilot's seat?" he asked, knowing he didn't need to wait for an answer. "All right!" Ryan shouted as he squeezed into the cramped cockpit. What an awesome sight to see your son slip into the pilot's seat and fulfill the first step of a childhood dream to be a pilot in the Air Force. Tears filled my eyes as my mind raced forward to the future. Would I one day again stand as I did now and watch my son climb into a pilot's seat? Would my heart want to burst with pride if I watched him fly off to defend our country or would it want to burst with pain at the fear of losing a son in war? My head was whirling with emotion when Ted, as if reading my mind, whispered, "Relax, it will be a long time before he's old enough to join the Air Force."

As we toured B-52s and KC-10s, I began to picture faces—faces of sons, fathers and husbands as they may have sat on the plane waiting to go to war. If these walls could talk, they would tell of jokes, stories, friendships and prayers that cultivate the common bond among men going into battle.

How proud I began to feel to have the opportunity to tour such a strategic part of America's armed forces. I felt a strong sense of security in knowing I was surrounded by men and women who were willing to give of themselves to defend our country. How proud I felt as I walked next to Ted and his men saluted him with respect.

We finished our tour on the west runway as we watched B-52s practice taking off and landing. How beautiful the boiling trail of smoke looked as it turned flaming orange against the sunset. Never before had I experienced such star-spangled pride! Never before had the awesome sight and deafening roar of the B-52 moved me to tears as it did that day. Always, I will remember the pride and deep patriotism I felt for America as I stood next to Ted and watched the last plane disappear into the approaching darkness.

Winter Night

by Emmitte Hall

It's nice not being cold
when the windows are closed against the winter wind
and the heater hangs a warm coat around the room.
In the corner, by my chair on a table,
rest a new book, my glasses and a lamp.

It's nice being warm.
the children tucked away since eight
and cocoa warming on the stove, the
fireplace sometimes crackling
in the pleasant stillness of the house.

It's nice being home
at night and being warm,
when the cold wind blows at the world outside.

I'll dim the lights
sit back and bathe in the wood fire glow
breathe in the steaming chocolate
and crack the book.
It's going to be a wonderful night.

Strength

by Beth Erickson

What is strength?
Is it holding on?
Is it hoping when all hope
seems gone?
Is being strong not giving in?
Is it striving, fighting till you win?
Is strength a virtue only found
In never giving up your ground?

What is strength?
Is it letting go?
Is it the courage to say, "I just
don't know?"
Does being strong mean
compromise?
Is it looking through objective eyes?
Is strength a step of pure,
blind trust?
Is it moving on when you know
you must?

Does strength mean holding down
the fort
And merely standing firm?
Or does strength mean searching,
reaching out
At the risk you might get burned?
And *is* strength really holding on,
Or is strength letting go?
Perhaps those are the strongest
Who are strong enough to know.

The Trees of Hands

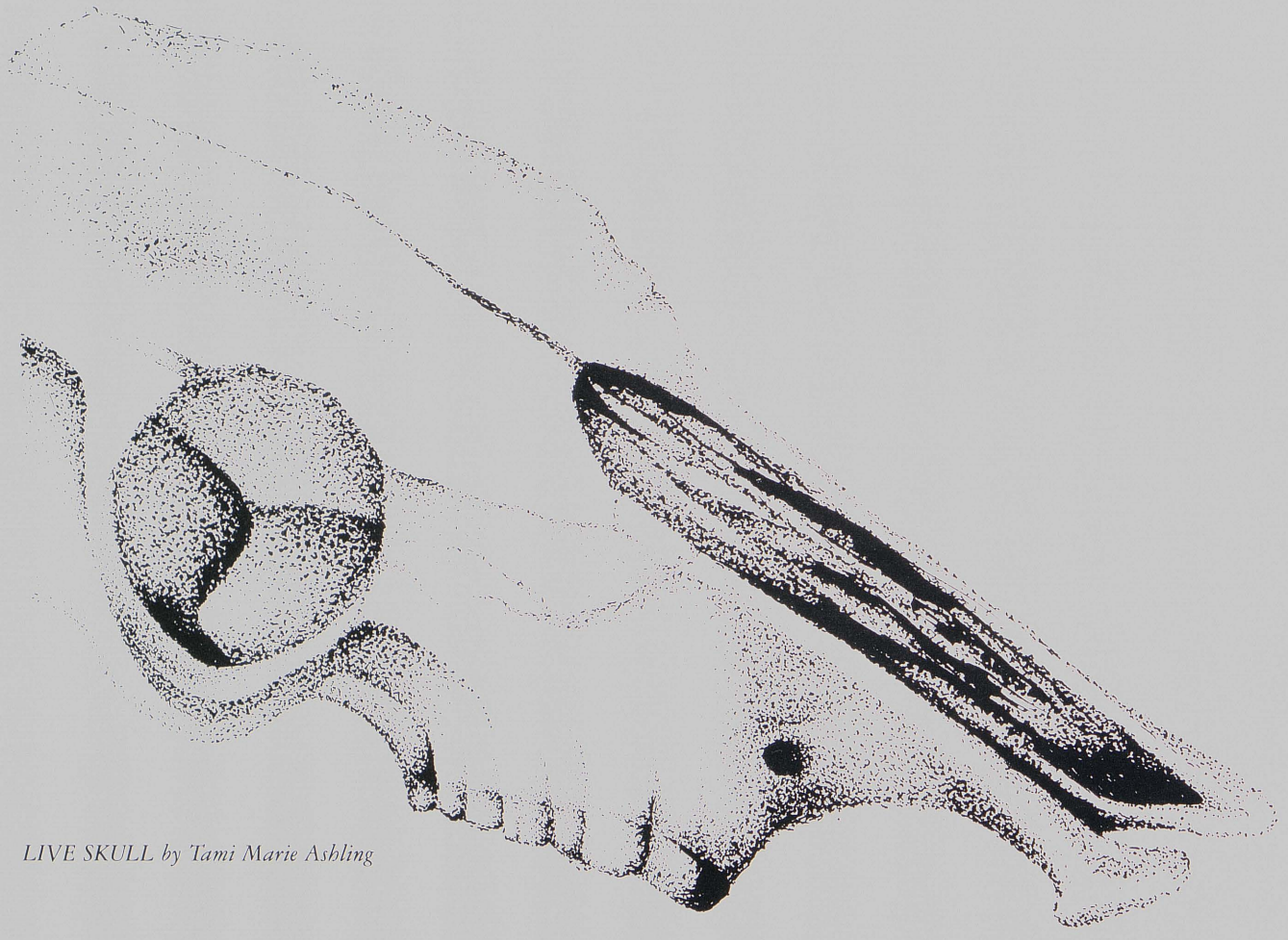
by Denise Duncan

The trees are covered with dampness,
the dogwoods stand still.
Trying to find my way through the darkness,
forever and ever until . . .

I'm looking into the shadow,
where things are never known.
Please help me out of this meadow.
Let my love be shown.

I'm only here for adventure,
I seek truth in everything I do,
But what I see in this nature,
is everything too few.

I'm trying to walk through the highlands,
and the trenches keep me behind.
I can always get through the trees of hands,
that wave me on into the sky.



LIVE SKULL by Tami Marie Ashling

The Persistent Memory

by Charline Wallis

Morning.
Cozy sheets
Reluctantly release
My body's warmth.
You stretch.

Dew-damp,
The scarlet rose
Watches brightly
As I pad by.
Paper's here.

Sunlight
Stripes the floor.
Dark coffee scent
Enwraps our hug.
It's how we start
Our every-day.
Our gently-breaking,
Fleeting, gone,
Our ordinary day.

Seizing a Winter Day

by Gloria Davis

Carpe diem is a time-honored Latin phrase that has survived in its original form. Its message—seize the day—is considered so important that it is assumed most people will recognize it even in Latin. Executive training programs in time-management and books such as "The One Minute Manager" attest to the importance placed on seizing every moment of the day, so my New Year's resolution is to try to seize every day.

Winter days are long and cruel, and I wonder how can I seize the day when it would so gladly seize me. The battle begins before daybreak; in the darkness of my bed, I hear voices. The clock radio has switched itself on. That means I have exactly six minutes to awaken sufficiently to move the switch from alarm to music before the electronic beep assaults my sleepy ears. I struggle to seize those six minutes—five for sleeping and one to find the switch. Click. I feel a small sense of triumph. I have battled the day for six minutes and won.

It is a small victory, but I am encouraged. The next objective is to actually get out of bed. The soft warmth of the bed cover conceals the stiff aching that envelopes my muscles when the message is sent to get up. Determined to seize a few more minutes of the day, I throw off the comforter and sit up. Unsteadily I stand, stretch and begin to move—another victory. The legs do still work; the back becomes straighter, and, forcing one foot in front of the other, I move across the room.

I stumble to the light switch in the bathroom for battle number three. Flipping on the light, I flinch as the brightness shocks my dark-enlarged pupils. I shield my eyes from the brightness and step into the shower. With curtain pulled the light is subdued and my grateful eyes adjust and agree to open.

Winning three battles in a row gives me great courage. I turn on the warm water. It flows over my body and washes away the stiffness; the gurgling is a gentle stimulant to my ears. As I relax in its soothing warmth, I am finally convinced that I can seize the day.

A Ray of Sunlight

by Merrill O. Cantrell

The shaft of light struck through the dank musty cell, scattering specks of dust in every direction. It came from a crack in the shutter that covered the window with its massive metals bars, sliced through the darkness for eight feet, then ended in a small triangular pattern showing a portion of wall covered by white, leprous mold and a portion of filthy floor slick with water from some unknown underground seepage.

The man, if such a pitiful emaciated body could still be called one, lay on a cot of rough-hewn wood and diagonally woven strips of rawhide with a single shabby blanket for sheet and cover. The darkness that covered his scantily clad body was merciless.

He watched every morning as the sun lined up with the crack in the shutter and shot a bright gleaming arrow across the room for a few minutes. His eyes, fascinated by the swarming specks of dust in the shaft of light, were hungry to the point of starvation for any image in the almost total darkness. He looked at the white mold on the wall, imagining that he could actually see it grow.

One day a scratching came from a dark corner and a furtive figure entered his little cone of visibility. He held his breath, not wanting to frighten away the little rat that provided variety for his limited vision. He noticed that its ribs showed through the gray fur of his skin, he too, must be a prisoner in this pit of darkness.

Each morning a few minutes before the sun came in, his keeper would reach through the three-by-six-inch slot at the bottom of the door and retrieve the bowl and insert a fresh one with hot mush, grits or oatmeal. He savored it down to the last bite.

This last bite he placed in the sunlight and soon the little rat was sharing his food and began to put on weight. He climbed up his arm and played on his shoulder. He curled up in a warm shirt pocket on cool nights. For a morsel of food each day, this man had found someone with whom to share the lonely hours.

The bright ray of sunshine lasted only 20 or 30 minutes each day. Then the sun would rise out of line with the crack so that only a faint glow would come through. Just enough to tell daylight from dark. Then night fell quickly, quietly shutting out even the gray glow, leaving the cell in total darkness.

He lay with his eyes open, he lay with his eyes closed. Under the

MORNING SONG by Gayle Herr Farwell

disguise of this devastating darkness he knew not whether he lay awake and remembered, or slept and dreamed. After six years, six rows of 365 scratches on the wall, it made little difference, the dream or remembrance was always the same.

Plink . . . plink . . . plink. He looked as another stone hit the window glass by his head. He grabbed his boots and quickly ran outside. Mary waited in the shadow of a big jasmine bush. The sickly sweet smell hung heavy in the air. Her oval face and normally rosy cheeks were white with fear in the fading moonlight just before dawn.

She cried as she told him, "I heard father talking with Don Tomas last night. He is taking me to the church this morning to marry Don Tomas!" He turned without a word and ran back into the bunkhouse, gathered his meager belongings into a saddle bag, and then took her into the barn.

He saddled her horse, tied on her saddlebags with a meager trousseau, an extra pair of jeans and rough shirt, some underclothes, and mirror, comb and brush. He added a blanket roll from a shelf in the stall, with blanket, tarp and poncho. He found his horse in the corral outside and saddled him. They led the horses quietly for a half mile before mounting and riding away fast.

They had planned to elope at the first good opportunity, ever since learning a few weeks ago of their love for each other. Both knew that her father would never allow her to marry a $40-a-month cowboy. This proposal by the richest man in the valley had forced their hand. They were fleeing with no firm destination in mind, little money and no food.

They rode hard all day, with no thought other than putting as much distance between her father's ranch and themselves as possible. At dusk they stopped in a grove of cottonwoods. A small spring bubbled and gurgled from the rocks into a little sandy basin then flowed out for about a half mile before being swallowed completely by the arid soil.

The weather was warm. They had no food to cook, so they did not need a fire. He unsaddled and tethered the horses so they could drink from the stream and eat the lush green grass along its banks. She disrobed and bathed in the spring.

She spread their blankets together on a thick mat of leaves under a big cottonwood while he bathed. Then they shared their first love. In its sweetness, the frantic rush away from ranch, the heat of the sun, the pricks of the cactus and fear of pursuit on the long ride through the semi-desert disappeared.

A horse neighed in the middle of the night. They awakened in fear, then finding no cause for alarm, they again joined in the love of two who have pledged themselves to each other for life. They slept soundly until dawn.

Again the nicker of a horse awoke them. He scanned the area all the way to the horizon, only to be nudged by Mary, laying quietly at his side. She pointed at the horses.

Directly across the little stream from their horses stood a huge 12-point buck watching intently while his little family of six drank from the stream. When they had finished, he moved down stream a little and drank his fill, then turned and led them away.

She rolled their bedding while he saddled the horses. They began passing cattle with a Bar H brand. She said quietly as though they might be overheard in the middle of nowhere, "I could eat one raw, Richard." He remembered how hard they rode yesterday and again today without food.

The anguish in his heart showed when he apologized for bringing her out like this with no food. She reminded him that it was her father and Don Tomas Queveda that caused their situation, then stated defiantly, "I would ride a week without food or water to foil their plans."

Luck took a hand then, they did not ride 10 more minutes until they were eating breakfast of bacon and eggs, hot cakes and strong cow-country coffee at the ranch of her father's bitterest rival. His wife packed enough smoked meat, beans, flour, salt and coffee to last them for seven days on the trail. She also gave them a coffeepot, bean pot and small frying pan.

The rancher had changed their saddles to strong range horses. He explained that he would have two of his men ride their horses to the west to draw off anyone on their trail. He advised them to ride north to Edinburg. The 500 steers he was about to drive that way would cover any tracks they left behind.

An hour before sundown they rested their horses in sight of Edinburg. Mary looked down. On this side of the town was a little mission church. She looked at him with upraised eyebrows, he nodded. They rode down to the little church and had the priest marry them.

The priest refused payment, but accepted a five dollar donation for the poor. He took the marriage certificate, folded it and slid it into a slit in the lining of his boot where he kept two 20 dollar bills for emergencies.

They rode away from town, made a wide circle to avoid any contact with people and found a good campsite by a small stream. After taking care of the horses, bathing and eating, they settled down for the night. This time nothing disturbed them.

Five days they rode leisurely; five nights they loved fiercely. Their marriage had removed the traces of guilt from the first night. They gave themselves fully to each other. They decided to go to El Paso to his uncle. There would be protection there until her father calmed down and accepted the marriage. They

they could go home, homestead in El Paso or move on to California.

On the morning of the eighth day they rode into a little mission. They dropped their reins and dismounted at the water trough. They had a dry camp the previous night. The priest came out to them, smiling, asking, "So you want to get married, eh, little ones?"

"I didn't realize it showed so much."

Mary grabbed him around the neck and kissed him deeply, then whispered in his ear, "Don Tomas just came out of the building, he will not harm me, but he will kill you if he knows we married, so ride like the wind for El Paso, I will join you as soon as I can!"

He grabbed the reins and slapped his horse on the rump, then mounted in a pony express running mount. Three vaqueros rode after him. Mexican vaqueros walk slow in the morning, sleep in the afternoon, but on horseback they have no equal. They ran him to ground less than five miles away.

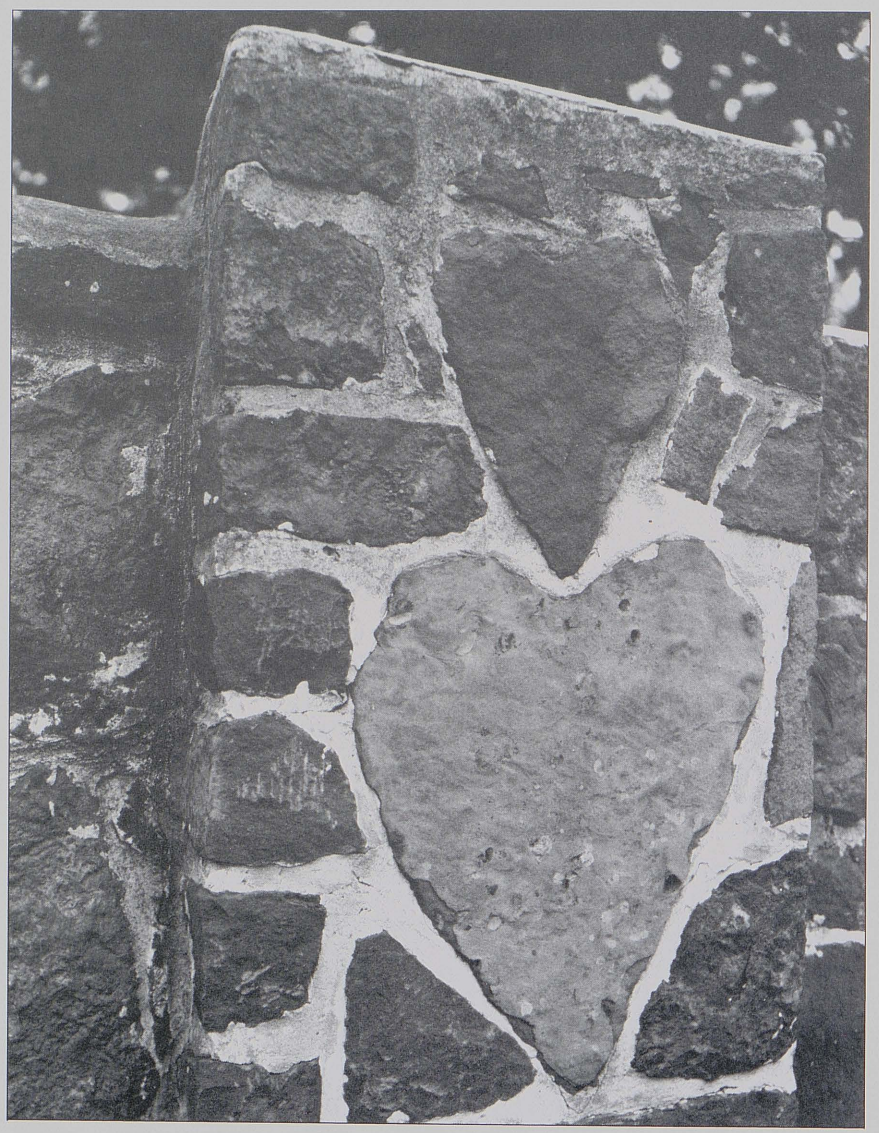
Their horses rested, they tied and blindfolded him, then brought him to this dungeon where he has remained prisoner for six long years. He retained a grip on his sanity at night by knowing that he would not exchange those seven days and nights with Mary for anything, in the day, by his tiny ray of sunlight.

love
beautiful, togetherness
teases human beings
imprinting forever on the
heart

by Missy Finneran

The sun rises.
The sun also sets.
Another day has passed.
What did you accomplish?

by Emmitte Hall



HIDDEN LOVE by Larry N. Chambers

Saren's Apostles

by Kelly Tarkington

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,
Old Time is still a-flying,
And this same flower that smiles today
Tomorrow will be dying.
—Robert Herrick

When I reached the hospital, I found the lobby was as quiet as the morgue. The lights had been turned down, and there wasn't a soul to be seen . . . I sprinted to the elevator and pressed the UP button two or three times before the damn thing finally came. I walked in a small circle as the elevator ascended, glancing upwards to see which number was being illuminated from time to time. I caught myself beginning to mumble "c'mon, c'mon" as if that would actually speed up the progress of the Otis . . .

The doors finally slid apart, and I sprang forth like a bull at Pamplona. I jogged . . . okay, so I ran to the ICU waiting room where Ben Garvey stood alone next to the window, hands jammed into his jeans and his sandy blonde head resting against the glass.

I whispered his name so as not to startle him. He moved his head just enough so that he could take me in.

"You must have flown," he commented.

I nodded. "How is she?"

He brought his shoulders up to his ears and then let them fall all without taking his hands from his pockets. "Gargantua kicked me out," he said, referring to the heavy set night nurse who hadn't taken very kindly to Ben or to me. "No one's said anything to me so far."

"I never should have left her," I blurted out, fear and guilt seizing me simultaneously and rendering me short of breath . . .

"She kicked you out Brett," he reminded me. "She wants you to get a life . . . she misses the point of your staying with her every night . . ."

"I just wanted to be here if . . . something happened . . ."

"Well, something has and here you are," he informed me quietly. There was an uncomfortable silence which Ben disrupted after a minute or so with a sad little laugh. I regarded the gesture as something of a public service.

"What's funny?"

"Saren's going to kill me, y'know. She gave me specific orders to not let you come if something should happen to her. She didn't want us here to watch her die . . . she wants us to remember her as being alive and vibrant. She kept saying that tonight like . . . like . . . I don't know . . . like she knew something was going to happen."

He made a fist then and banged it against the pane. The sharp thudding sound his action had produced made me jump, and I looked at him noting his reddened face and dry eyes.

"How could this happen?" he growled. "How?" His question was punctuated by another blow to the window. "Saren's 19, Brett . . . 19. My dad's got neckties older than that . . . Ugly old things that will outlast Saren . . . that will outlast my **friend**."

The final word was delivered through clenched teeth and when I saw that jugular protruding from his neck, I moved away from him and settled in a chair, figuring he'd rather be alone with his anger . . . at least for a while.

"'A man that is young in years may be old in hours if he has lost not time.'" I spoke quietly, the words coming to me in a veritable uprush of recollection. Saren had spoken them to me shortly before she discovered that she was ill. It seemed rather odd that the phrase would end up being so prophetic.

Saren's entire life seemed a constant reminder to all onlookers that our existence here on this planet is incredibly short, and that one must live every day as if it were the last, because one day most certainly would be. She cited her parents as an example of a pair of people who had tiptoed through life so as to arrive safely at death. She described then as fearful people who couldn't experience because they were too scared to.

The result? Saren said they were as boring as dirt as well as being closed-minded and afraid. They had a great fear of flying . . . thought it a silly and unnecessary risk, and were killed in an automobile accident on the way to the train station. Saren had been 11 at the time, and through her sadness, she had been struck by the irony of the event. Shortly after the deaths of her parents, she resolved to live strongly and boldly until she couldn't anymore. Now it seemed as if that day were drawing nearer much too rapidly.

Suddenly, Ben's anger managed to travel across the chasm that spanned from his consciousness to mine, and I began to feel his animosity within me. Saren Guilford was only 19, and she was brilliant. Her mind was like a sponge ready to soak in new and different things. She had such a longing to know and comprehend that she had become a bonafide autodidact, reading anything she could get her hands on and then thinking about it, incorporating whatever she could into the ornate tapestry of her life so that she could live it better . . . more fully.

She wrote prolifically. Epic poems, fiction, you name it. Her paintings were radiant and wonder-

ful watercolors that leapt from the paper and drew you into their warmth and energy the way Saren herself could. A smile from her could bring people, in like water in a vortex, and her soft, easy voice caressed the consciousness of her listeners like lush velvet . . .

"Brett?"

"You rang?" I croaked out, battling the lump trying to form in my throat and losing miserably.

"Do you think this is fair?" he questioned, intent on the pulsating metropolis that lay sprawled before him outside that window. "What's happened to Saren, I mean . . ."

"Nope, but what're you gonna do?"

"I could get really pissed off," Ben proposed. "And I could go through life better and hateful because I believe things to be so unjust."

"You'd like to go back to doing that, eh?" I wanted to know.

"And totally turn my back on everything that girl laid up in ICU taught me? No way . . . my regression back into a sardonic, narrow-minded, cynical misanthrope would hardly be a fitting tribute to her . . . Besides brooding for eternity couldn't possibly be a feasible solution to much of anything. I learned that lesson well enough . . ."

I regarded Ben for a moment, thinking about the day we'd met and how amazed I had been when I told him my name, and he instantly recognized it from one of Hemingway's most well-known novels rather than responding that it was the weirdest name for a girl that he'd ever heard.

King of backyard spa
Bluejay bathes, wearing his crown,
In worn-out pie-tin.

by Carolyn Hendon

Owl eyes scissortail
Beak gripping worm awriggle
Circles, cutting edges.

by Carolyn Hendon

Rainy day bouquet
Profusion of time-lapse blooms
Unfurled umbrellas.

by Carolyn Hendon

Nature, white and still,
awakens to the movement
of graceful deer.

by Elaine D. Grayhill

I had drawn my knees up to my chin and held my legs close to my chest. I rocked back and forth very slowly and stared out the window considering the impact that Saren Guilford had had on Ben Garvey and on me as well . . .

She had drawn me out of myself as she had done with Ben, and she had shown me that life should be experienced with great passion and at the same time, with reverent inner quietness. She had shown me that I was so much like her parents had been, and then helped me to transform into a real human being . . . into someone who had learned how to live, not just exist . . . I had risen like a blazing phoenix from the black ashes of my self-induced midnight and, as a result, I had acquired the greatest prize of all . . . myself . . . true and shining.

I felt something profound stir within me then, and I was compelled to rise from my chair and move towards the window. I reached out and touched the glass, its coolness soothing my fevered psyche as I stared out into the black sky, the moon the only celestial entity not obscured by the lights from the city beneath it. My eyes strayed from the glowing lunar orb to an area that I perceived to be in the deepest of space, and a fiery streak split the sky, arcing like a perfectly launched pyrotechnic and then was consumed by the atmosphere.

I stood motionless for a moment, aware only of the place in the universe where the star had been and the sensation of Ben beside me. There was an unearthly silence as we stood side by side listening to one another breathe, contemplating what we had just witnessed and realizing what it meant. I had the sensation of eons flying by as I stood there basking in the light of sudden realization. It was as if God had bestowed something sacred and pure upon us, and we were present and ready to accept it . . . Ben and Saren and I.

Time Slips Away

by Patricia Wines

I have often considered myself as one of the very fortunate few because my grandparents are still living, but in the past few years it has been a bittersweet feeling because I have moved 1,200 miles from them, AND I know my time with them will not last forever. My grandparents are both in their eighties, and in the summer of 1988 when we went to visit them I realized they are not immortal. Suddenly it seemed important to preserve the life, the memories, experiences and traditions that were most memorable to my grandparents. During the past two summers that I have visited my grandparents, I have taped their stories, learned the art of quilting, and in the process created fond memories of my own.

In the summer of '89, I showed up at my grandparents' house armed with tapes and a tape recorder. Every afternoon we would sit out on the front porch, and start talking about their lives. I have recorded stories of my grandfather and his family moving from the Pecos, Texas, area to southeastern New Mexico in a covered wagon when he was seven years old, and of his responsibility for the care of the extra horses. He tells of his first memories of what is now called Carlsbad Caverns; back then the people in the area just thought it was a hole in the ground, and they called it the "bat cave." I have my grandparents' memories of raising my mother and my uncle during the depression years when my grandfather was a "dude wrangler" at the Grand Canyon. He was responsible for taking the tourists down to the bottom of the canyon on the mules, and my grandmother worked in the guesthouse kitchens. They recall grandfather bringing home the fruit the tourists left in their lunches because they could not afford to buy the fruit in the stores. I have descriptions of their lives on the cattle ranches that my grandfather worked on all his working years, and also their accounts of the so-called "good ole days," which my grandmother says "were just plain hard work." And, most important, I have recorded their versions of living a life that has spanned an era that began with the horse and buggy and has advanced to today's technology.

During my visits I have also taken advantage of my grandmother's talent as a quilter. Each summer my grandmother and I go through her numerous quilt patterns, many of which she got from her mother, and we cut, sew, and quilt a quilt. The first summer we picked a simple nine-patch pattern. In the center of each block we embroidered a small character, flowers or animal, which we took off transfers that belonged to my great-grandmother. The second summer we did a more complex maple leaf pattern, and after we finished the quilt, my grandmother entered it in a quilt show. We received an honorable mention. It was also the only quilt entered that had been made by grandmother and granddaughter. I have both these quilts in my possession now, and I cannot think of a more precious heirloom to pass on to my children and grandchildren.

Meanwhile, I have fond memories of time spent with my grandparents. I recall making ice cream in an old-fashioned, wooden, hand-cranked ice cream bucket that belonged to my grandmother's mother. On the afternoons we make ice cream, we take everything out in the backyard under the shade tree, and make, eat and enjoy our ice cream the same way my grandmother and her family enjoyed making ice cream when she was a little girl. Making ice cream this way has become a practice we continue visit after visit. Another pastime I have enjoyed at my grandparent's house is the card or domino games we always play. Four generations—my grandparents, my mother, my husband and I and our children—sit at the kitchen table in the evenings and enjoy a closeness of family that bridges all generation gaps. These games often continue from year to year, and they are a memory of family closeness and companionship we all look forward to.

Even though I do not get to see my grandparents as frequently as I would like, I always try to make the most of our time spent together. The quiet afternoons on the porch, the closeness of working side by side while quilting, the enjoyment of making homemade ice cream, and the companionship of the evening games are moments that I may never recapture again. I am thankful that I have had these opportunities to spend the time with these two wonderful people.

The Beast of Time

by Eric Morgan

That wild untamed four legged
beast.
Never stopping before anyone.
Always running away,
While people are constantly trying
to leash.

Some may say that the beast moves
too fast,
While others say it moves too slow.
Galloping forward to the future,
And at the same time leaving dust
on the past.

The beast can be seen devouring
the young,
And leaving the old in its waste.
Leaving wrinkles with its teeth,
And taking away hair with its
tongue.

One can run away from the beast,
And let it dictate his every move.
Or he can hunt the beast,
And take it for all it is worth.

Wake Up

by Sheree Crawford

A rose is a simple object,
but at the same time very complex.
It steals your attention with its beauty,
and suddenly makes you forget.
That tomorrow is just another day,
with its turmoils, trials and pains.
Perhaps things will turn out for the best,
but the memory still remains.
Nevertheless a rose is like an innocent heart,
without love it is sure to die.
Just the way our people are doing
because time has passed them by.
The world needs to wake up
and see each day for what it means.
Realize that every second is essential,
but not as long as it seems.
If you love someone then express this feeling
in a kind and loving way.
Never let yesterday become a reality
without saying I love you today.
Tomorrow is a precious word,
yet we know not what it will be.
Seize the day with all it offers,
for it's tomorrow you might not see.

Just Do It

by John Sergio

When I was younger
My legs were as fast as the fastest
My arms were as strong
My feet were as quick
My hands were as good as the best.

But I didn't think so then.
So I didn't try.

Today I know
I was good enough then.

But today I am not.

UNTITLED by Brad L. Miller

Grandpa

by Ana Carson

We saw him daily.
He used to come back alone
from his noon walks
to the Public Library.
He always wore
his best shoes,
a discreet tie,
gold framed dark glasses,
the mahogany cane
on his right hand,
and the grey flannel cap,
we had bought him,
Advents ago,
stuffed
into his tweed jacket pocket.
This cap,
always a little
visible and bending
the pocket's overlap
towards the inside lining,
made Grandpa
appear to move lopsided.
A free swinging left arm,
with an old, tepid,
red chapped factory hand
with long and big
knuckled fingers,
swayed what lively
Granny Llusia called:
"Another book!"

Memories from a Button Box

by Margaret B. Clark

Grandmother had a button box. I have her buttons and some of my own, but I keep them in a clay turtle from Mexico. We shared a name, a birth month, part of our lives.

She was modest and flustered easily. I am modest only about my accomplishments . . . but I do blush.

I like to look at her buttons. They are so intricate with detail . . . from another time. I like to remember when I wore mine, what clothes they adorned.

I thought her wrong only when she preached prejudice. I could stand up on the front seat of the old black car and my head not even touch the ceiling when I first remember her talking about other people . . . different races, different politics, women and men.

She cooked fried chicken and tiny Polish sausages, and steak pie and made iced tea sirupy with sugar, served in big round goblets. She made cinnamon twists with canned biscuits. I didn't like them much, but I did like to lick the cinnamon and sugar off my fingers as we made them.

She did beautiful things with her hands . . . quilts, doilies, clothes . . . but she complained that they hurt her all the time. She put a crochet hook in my tiny preschool hand and taught my how to pull the thin cotton cord through my fingers and create little shells around washcloths. Later I would make shells around my own babies' blankets. She never used a pattern, said she couldn't understand the directions. She would just look at something and figure out the stitches. She made so many of my growing up clothes, and she rarely used a pattern for those either. Mother sent her my measurements as I outgrew the previous batch and new clothes would appear. I was a teenager before it embarrassed me to wear her hand-made clothes. Had I gotten too big or had her skills faded?

She always smelled flowery with perfume. Such exotic bottles graced her dresser scarf: Tabu, My Sin, Evening in Paris. She was soft and pink and white and fluffy and covered her mouth when she laughed. She wore sensible shoes and stockings, no pantyhose for her, and I never, ever saw her in slacks even when she gardened or fed the blind calf. She had a halo of bluish gray hair helped along with rinse and perm. Her glasses were wire rims from another decade. She liked rhinestone clip earrings. A purple pair were her favorites.

She had her own Christmas. When we were little we sent letters to Santa with the fairies in the fireplace. She had a plastic gumdrop tree and a little Santa, sleigh and reindeer and there would always be tiny presents for all of us in his sleigh. When we were older we complained about having to make the trip because we were so spread out and had our own families, but most of the time we did it anyway.

She hummed and sang when she cooked or rocked or sewed, but would be embarrassed if you noticed.

She was a quiet tyrant, a master manipulator, guilt her instrument. She hung it over our heads like one hangs a windchime. You don't notice it most of the time, but when the wind blows, the chimes are surprising at first and then you remember.

When she came to visit she slept with me in my double bed. She'd settle in the bed amidst a cloud of talcum and I would roll toward her because she was so heavy. She held my hand in the dark and talked softly. She'd laugh and I'd try to imagine her without her hand up to mask her smile. She talked of purity and how men were always little boys and how I should be when I grew to be a woman.

Once, when I was a tomboyish preteen, I spent several hot summer days with her on the farm. I lay in the hammock on the screened porch the whole time and read all of the "Tarzan" and "Hardy Boy" books while she brought me that sweet iced tea. She clucked at me for preferring those adventurous books her boys had liked over the wholesome "Little Colonel" books. I never did read any of those "Little Colonel" books.

She was born in a different century. When she was three, she came by covered wagon to where she would live the rest of her life. She talked of hearing coyotes at night and the fear of crossing several large rivers with no bridges. She lived from covered wagons to spaceships . . . from a one room schoolhouse to computer chips.

She was in her 50s when Grand-Daddy died. I was five. She always referred to his death as when "he left her." I don't think she ever got past the anger of his "leaving" so suddenly.

There's a picture of her as a teen with my grandfather it hurts me to look at. Her eyes pierce my soul and look sad, imploring. I feel like it's me in the picture, but different. I don't know this young woman. I'll never know her. She is beautiful in a dark, mysterious, almost shy way. How did she ever become the large, soft, gray, old woman I came to know?

Tar Baby II

by Sarah Harrison

There was a time I seized the day,
Shook it good, then heard it say,
"Please let me go and I will grant
the things to you that others can't."

Its clear request, could I deny?
So soon that day went hopping by,
Calendar square to track my fear—
No genie found this briarpatch year.

The Last Sunrise

by Dustin W. Hood

It was the beginning of a beautiful day, but it seemed like the end of the entire world for me, at the youthful age of 14. The scarlet-yellow sun was rising over the lush green clover on the hill between my house and the lake. My dog, a black Labrador retriever named Fred, was running around the lake sniffing and snapping his powerful teeth at jumping, green grass-hoppers. The trees, which looked larger than ever, were full of pure yellow, orange, and scarlet leaves rustling in the cool crisp autumn breeze. My heart was warmer and fuller than ever before. At the same time, however, it was stone cold with remorse; I would never see the sun rise here again. Tomorrow, when the movers came, my mother's essentials would go to one city, my father's to another and I would be trapped in the center of the conflict. I suddenly realized that I must seize the day because soon all the beautiful things surrounding me would be gone.

I decided I would go fishing for the last time. As I watched my cork bobble in the lake, I tried to imagine what it would be like living in the city. Through the silver reflection of the water I pictured the battleground. I could not see any tall Bahia grass or lush green clover. Instead, I pictured long hideous streets and mounds of dead concrete. Instead of the beautiful lake before me, I saw a filthy river filled with garbage and raw sewage. I would never again be able to drink from the lake by which I had grown up. There would be no tall trees with beautiful crimson and yellow leaves. In their place would be plain telephone poles and dull street lights. Instead of watching the beautiful sunrise in the clear blue sky, I would see smog, smoke and acid rains. I suddenly caught a fish. It was little but beautiful, for it was the last.

I decided I would take Fred for our last walk I desperately wondered what would happen to us. I did not know what I would do without Fred. I would never again see his beautiful, sleek, black coat or his big, sad eyes. We would never again be able to roll and play in the tall grass while he tried to lick his big, sloppy tongue all over my face. I dreamed he had to live in a dog pound. I pictured him in a little cage with a concrete floor. He would be cold and lonely. There would be no one to pet him or run with him; therefore, he would die with no one there to care. But that day, I cared, and I would make that day last forever.

I then went to the big barn and ate lunch. It was my favorite place to go. I climbed on top of the silver metal roof and ate a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. I could see the entire ranch from up there. I looked at the empty stockyards. At one time, they were full and busy with cattle. I could see all the fences on the ranch. I remembered how I hated clearing brush off them. I would have blisters on my hands from the powerful ax and smooth sling blade. I dreamed of all the hay we once kept in the empty barn. I could build the best fortress with that hay. I loved to jump and play in it.

It was getting dark and it was time to go in the house. I was tromping through the tall grass toward the house. I realized my last day was gone and I was happy with the way I had lived that day. I had seized that day because it was my last. I would remember it always.

We see which way the stream of time does run. And are enforced from our quiet there. By the rough torrent of occasion.

—Shakespeare

Torrent of Occasion

by ~~Denise Duncan~~
by G. Paul Ray

Jeff was *so* scared.

It was the kind of scared where the only movement was the mind. And the movement was that of a reckless driver speeding away from something that was bound to be following.

The beginning of the Jeff's story was a year earlier. It was on a Thursday late in March that Jeff Orr and some of his fellow freshmen classmates were honoring their spring break from Ellison High.

Ellison was a small and restful town the night the call was made. An amazing percentage of youths had been bussed off by various churches to hit the ski slopes for a week. Since his older brother, Jerry, was one of the lucky ski-mongers, and his parents were gone to Dallas for the night, the house was all Jeff's.

His friends arrived around 7 o'clock. Jim O'Connor was the first one there. Kevin and Kelly were next. They were the Gardner brothers who lived around the block. And Donald Perrine was the last to arrive at Jeff's house.

They had all gathered around the television, talking and switching channels when an adoption commercial came on. A voice read the number at the bottom of the screen: 1-800-ADOPT-US.

"Have you ever wondered about those numbers?" Donald began as the room quieted down. "They must figure it's more fun to go searching for the letter on the phone than dialing the numbers."

"Those calls are toll free. Let's call one." That was Kelly talking. After all, it was free entertainment.

Kevin insisted on calling first. Jeff thought to use the speaker phone in his dad's office. "Don't anybody touch anything. Just listen." It was a sleek model phone with a speaker built in.

He set the phone where the dial tone could be heard over the speaker, and Kevin punched in 1-800-ADOPT-US with a slight hesitation necessary to find the right letters.

"Adoption Network. Can I help you?"

"Sure," began Kevin, "I'd like two large pepperoni and mushroom pizzas to go!"

He burst out laughing, though no one thought it was funny.

Then Donald spoke: "Let me try something. Let me dial 1-800-Perrine."

"Hey, that's a pretty cool idea," Kevin said giving his approval over the second thing Donald had said that night.

Then it was Kelly's turn with 1-800-GARDNER. Both of them received the same recorded message.

Jim tried 1-800-O'CONNOR. Kevin suggested he call 1-800-DUMB-JIM, and everyone laughed. That was when Jim and Kevin got in an argument over the phone. During the scuffle it was knocked off the desk and broken.

"Idiots! You ruined the phone!" Jeff was upset. "That's my dad's phone.

"I didn't even get to make a call and it's my house."

Jeff paused and looked at the phone before he continued. "I am going upstairs and use the phone in my parents' bedroom. You stay down here."

Jeff always regretted not taking anyone upstairs that night.

He plopped down in the big bedside chair and picked up the Victorian phone and dialed 1-800-JEFF-ORR.

Ring. Ring. Ring. R-

"Hello." He wasn't expecting an answer.

"Is Jeff Orr there?" Jeff thought that was a safe way to back out of having to talk. It certainly was more polite than ordering pizza.

"This is he," said a familiar voice.

"'Scuse me?"

"This is Jeff Orr," the voice spoke again. It sounded unmistakably like Jeff.

"Yea right." He mused, as if he had discerned some practical joke. "I guess I'll be seeing me around."

He hung up.

Jeff sat in the chair trying to rationalize. *Look, he thought, this is just some joke. Jerry didn't go skiing, He's on the extension in the kitchen. Everyone says we sound the same on the phone.*

Jeff ran downstairs. "You guys are good," Jeff said shaking his index finger toward them as he passed. "But, not good enough."

"Okay, Jerry. The guys confessed. You aren't so clever." Jeff was standing in the middle of the kitchen with his arms crossed, reassuring himself a reasonable

explanation existed. Donald came walking into the kitchen, and their faces were convincingly innocent.

"Okay, which one of you guys was it? No more games." He was grasping for an explanation. He wanted any offering of reason and rationality. And he was willing to accept anything.

"I'm serious. Who was on that phone?"

"We don't know what you are talking about. Honestly," Jim said.

Jeff dialed 1-800-JEFF-ORR on the kitchen phone. "Let's see who talks this time." but, there was only a pre-recorded message.

It was such a stupid thing to even consider. Accordingly, not much else was even said about it. And later that night, they all piled pillows on the living room floor and talked themselves to sleep.

It was little past 4 a.m. when Jeff heard the phone ring. The other guys were fast asleep. Jeff hadn't even reached the threshold of sleep, because he had been thinking about the call. He got up and jogged into the kitchen, where phone wasn't ringing, and he picked it up.

"Hello." There was only a dial tone. The ringing persisted from upstairs.

He bolted upstairs in a mad dash. Reaching the doorway, he dove across the bed, yanking the receiver off its stand.

Nothing but dial tone.

He rolled over on his back. Then he wondered why the extension in the kitchen had a dial tone when this phone was ringing. Then he remembered it was this phone that he had made the call from. A very cold and consuming fear came with his realization. *That phone was here in the house when we moved here.* And for a moment he was taken back to the memories of moving across town.

Jeff and Jerry ran ahead upstairs when the family came to look at the house. There, all alone in the corner sat the phone that now occupied his parents' nightstand. The realtor told his mother the previous owner had left it. His mother loved the phone and got to keep it.

Jeff remembered that day now. He sat up on the edge of the bed and made the call again: 1-800-JEFF-ORR.

It barely rang once. "Jeff, is that you?" the urgent voice blurted out from over the phone. "Don't hang up! What I have to tell you is about the future. It's about Dad. Jeff, you've got to-"

"Who is this? What is happening?" Jeff was breathing deeply as he hung up.

That happened a year earlier, to the very night. Jeff was reliving the entire experience as he sat paralyzed in the present.

While the Jeff of the past remained obsessed with understanding exactly what had happened, he didn't talk at all about the subject of that call after his life was changed dramatically the next week. His father died in a malfunctioning flight out of Love Field in Dallas. Though it had now been practically a year since his father's death, time had not done much to heal the pain of the loss.

To most people, the Orr family had handled the tragedy better than expected. But to Jeff, Jerry and Barbara Orr, who lived day and night with the absence of their loved one, the tragedy seemed to grow exponentially with each night that there was an empty chair at the supper table. Jeff had come to expect the chair to be empty when he sat down, but expectation was far from cathartic.

And as he now sat alone, across the bed on the opposite nightstand was a picture of his father.

Jeff's mind screeched to a halt, then sped up again on new fuel. He wasn't concerned with understanding anymore. He didn't need to rationalize the power that the phone possessed in order to utilize it.

If he was deducing reasonably, then the call he had received moments ago was the exact same call he had made a year earlier. Only now, he was on the other end. The caller was indeed the Jeff Orr of a year ago. And somewhere, somehow, across fields of time, there was a Jeff Orr in the past who was as very much confused as the one who now sat in the present.

Since the call, he had not left the chair. He had merely stared blankly at everything in the room, and seen nothing but the edge of the bed where he had made the call a year earlier and the picture of his father. The Jeff Orr he had just talked to still had a father for about another week, he reasoned.

Jeff believed that if the Jeff from a year earlier was also going to make that second call, he could be warned about his father's death.

If I could warn "me" to persuade Dad against taking that flight in the past, what would happen now? Jeff asked himself. Would it seem as if he never had died? Would I remember his death?

Or would nothing change at all?

What if it simply made Dad alive today, trapped in his casket? If he is going to come back to life where he is, his body would need to be disinterred.

If he could only know exactly what would happen, he could prepare for it. However, if he needed to exhume his father's corpse before talking to "himself" on the phone again at 4 o'clock, he didn't think he could prepare for that.

But, Jeff rationalized to himself, *if he were to come back to life in his grave only to die again, I would never have to know. There is always the possibility that nothing at all would change.* This was another horrifying and comfortless thought.

It was 4 a.m., and he sat silently watching the phone. He was determined to change the course of time, or at least try.

Wait a minute! I only knew to call back on that phone—this phone—he corrected himself—*because I heard it ringing when the other phone wasn't. Maybe I should call 1-800-JEFF-ORR again. Maybe that will wake "me" up*

in the past. He made the call.

He tensed, then hung up after the tenth ring. At that instant, across an unexplained void of time, a Jeff Orr lay stretched across his parents' bed listening to a dial tone.

Both Jeffs stared at the same phone.

The past Jeff placed the call again. And the present Jeff yanked up the receiver.

Jeff spoke to his past Jeff. "Jeff, is that you? Don't hang up! What I have to tell you is about the future. It's about Dad. Jeff, you've got to-"

"Who is this? What is happening?" The past Jeff abruptly hung up.

Jeff had blown his opportunity. He realized that it was the same conversation from a year earlier. Only now he was on the other side. Nothing had changed. Nothing would change unless he did something different.

He picked up the phone and dialed 1-800-JEFF-ORR. There was an answer on the third ring.

"Hello," the voice said. But this wasn't the voice of Jeff Orr from a year earlier. This voice was very much older, like the voice of an 80-year-old man.

"Jeff Orr speaking." There was only silence for a moment as both Jeffs thought about what was happening.

"Jeff, is that you? I mean me. Wait!" The old man shouted. He was talking fast now. "I know this is me. I mean I know that it is you, Jeff. I didn't know if I would ever get this call. What ever you do don't hang up, please! I have to tell you something about your future."

The Jeff Orr of the present was in a dazed shock. But, in the swift horror of realizing what was happening, he recoiled and slammed the phone down in violent disbelief.

What is happening?

Jeff was *so* scared.

UNTITLED by Diana Hanson

Patience of Obsession

by G. Paul Ray

This is how it began:

Lori Huntington came to Manhattan in February of 1990. She was special to me from the moment I saw her. There was something genuine about her. Her long black hair wasn't supported by a lot of spray, and her face wasn't caked in store-bought beauty. She was a natural. And there was just enough mystique shrouding her to hook me and keep me fascinated.

She landed a job as a reservationist at the hotel where I worked in Times Square. When I overheard she was looking for a place in Manhattan, I invited her to move in with me. I handled myself with remarkable nonchalance. I explained, of course, that I lived in a three bedroom apartment in Lower Manhattan. I told her I had one guy and two girls for roommates and one of the girls was leaving for New Orleans two weeks later.

Purely platonic, I assured.

A few days later, Lori accepted.

She took the fold-out couch in the living room with no complaints and moved in her few belongings.

The very first day she was there I saw her take the purse and leave. It didn't seem too odd at the time, but we all began to notice that she never stayed around the apartment.

I talked to her when I could. I loved to just sit and look at her face as we talked about anything. Despite how strongly I became attracted to her, I don't believe it was ever obvious.

I tried to get her to talk about her past, but she avoided it. And I didn't push.

Occasionally, I took her out to eat or to a show. Lori was always polite and enjoyable on our dates, but she seemed rushed, like there was always a sense of urgency to get back to the apartment. Once back home, she would grab that purse and leave, saying she had a wonderful time.

Being the naturally curious sort, it wasn't long before I began to follow. I wanted to know more about Lori and what she was doing. But, I didn't think it was a good idea to confront her.

Each time I followed her it was the same routine. She walked from our apartment on 23rd Street across Madison Square Park and over to the subway.

Each time, Lori got off at 42nd Street and walked the rest of the way up to Central Park. I followed not too far behind. I was always a little nervous. But, if she saw me, I planned to talk like I was surprised to see her.

Lori was so mysterious that I was driven to know more about her and what she was doing on her straight and frequent outings. For reasons I can't explain, I had premonitions of something sinister about the whole situation. I also concluded I shouldn't follow her. Whatever she was up to was her business, and I had no right to know.

But, who was I fooling? I would follow until I my curiosity was quenched.

This went on for months. Any spare time she had, Lori grabbed the same purse and headed out the door. I wasn't always able to follow her, but I knew her routine well enough. I spent a few entire Saturdays spying on her as she walked all over Central Park.

That may not sound strange to you. After all, a lot of people go walking or jogging through Central Park daily. Why should she be a special case?

Lori Huntington was different.

That's the easiest way I can say it. I don't think I can explain it more effectively. She just looked, . . . wrong. That's all. She was out of place with the rest of the city.

Or so it seemed.

It was a cool day at the end of September when it happened. A cold front settled in and started chilling things up considerably. Naturally, it happened on a day that I had followed her.

It was like the usual ritual: down through Madison to the sub and up to 42nd.

She had walked a good bit covering most of the park and had stopped at a knish stand in front of the Metropolitan Museum on Fifth. I summoned a casual attitude and strolled up to her.

"Lori," I said. "Hey, you been in the Met?"

She looked definitely stunned. It was as if I had disturbed an artist in the middle of a painting. But, Lori recovered quickly.

"Why, no. I'm just out for a walk." Then she made a face like she didn't believe the line herself.

"Mind if I join you? I've some time to kill."

We entered Central Park together near the Met and began making our way around to the Egyptian obelisk.

That was when it all happened.

In the blink of an eye.

There were footsteps coming up behind us, as if a jogger was about to pass. I sensed Lori tense. Then, there was a sudden convulsion as her purse was ripped from her hand and she fell over into me. A thug sprinted on up the path and around the corner.

I was in shock for a moment. It happened so quickly I wasn't sure what was going on. When I came to my senses, I looked to Lori, who was more composed than I was. Then, I was about to chase after the guy, who probably would have beaten me silly and taken my wallet if I had caught him.

She stopped me. She was sitting on the ground and she put a hand on my shoulder and stopped me.

"No," was all Lori said.

At first, I thought she meant there was nothing important in her purse and I wouldn't need to get beaten up attempting to look manly after all. She reached into her pocket and pulled out a little device the size and design of a television remote control. It was metallic silver with one button in the center and a switch on the side. She smiled. Then, she flipped the switch and pressed the button.

From around the bend in the path was a terrific explosion. It sounded like several guns being discharged simultaneaously. Through the bushes and trees I could see the orange cloud of flames. There were screams, too. I think one of them was mine. And a horrible odor filled the air.

I looked back to Lori. I don't know what my face must have looked like I was thinking, but her face was pleasant and relieved.

"Let's go eat," she said. "I'm suddenly ravenous."

We ate and she began to talk.

Lori was a new person. It felt so good that she had finally opened up to me. But, at the same time, I was wondering if the girl that fascinated me so strongly had just walked away from a murder before sharing quaint little anecdotes from her past.

Finally, I had to ask the question at the risk of destroying the jovial luncheon chat. "Did you just kill someone, Lori?"

Her face sunk to seriousness. She knew it was coming.

"No," she replied. Then, she paused before going on. "I just avenged someone."

I didn't have to say anything. I knew there was more coming.

"When I was six, I came to New York with my mother to visit my aunt and uncle. It was a powerful experience for a little girl from East Texas, you understand. The city and all, I mean.

"I generally remember impressions, though, and not specific incidents . . ." Lori looked down to her food, then back to me.

"However," she said, with a more urgent voice, "what I do remember is the day my mother was robbed in Central Park. Oh, he didn't get much. Mother left most of our money at my uncle's.

"It tore her apart. To have someone rip your purse from your hand and carry it off. It's a very invading experience whether it's empty or not." Then, she smiled.

"Mine wasn't empty today."

"This was all for your mom? Because she had her purse snatched when you were six?" When I asked that, I felt I had crossed an imaginary line that I shouldn't have crossed. But, a few lines had already been crossed that day.

"Yes and no. It was for every woman who ever had her privacy violated by some thug. That guy today was probably some homeless drug addict who victimized women all the time. I doubt he'll do it again."

Do you think it killed him?????

"I don't know. She took a bite. He took his fate in his own hands when he snatched my purse. He set his options in motion, and the consequences were triggered by his decision. Lori went on eating as if she had said all she needed to say. I ate some too, as if the topic had blown over like a bad storm. But, I needed to know more.

"So, after all these years you carried around that grudge of your mother having her purse snatched? Have you thought of that these many days that you patiently waited for someone to steal your purse? Did you plan to move here for the purpose of righting that wrong?"

"Maybe I did come here knowing I would do this, but what happened today didn't right any wrong. And all the waiting was worth it."

I thought it was time to drop the subject until it presented itself again.

We finished our food and left the restaurant with little conversation. But we spent the rest of the day together laughing and enjoying life. I wanted to hold her hand, but that always conjured up visions of adolescence.

We went to Shea and saw the Mets lose their season finale. It was a grand time. Finally, I felt we had reached the relationship I wanted.

On the ride back to Manhattan, I thought back to what had been the catalyst for Lori opening up to me. Had that man died? Had he deserved it? If he hadn't stolen the purse, he'd be just fine. And how could she have lived so close with that obsession for so long, waiting for that one possible moment?

I did my best to put that behind me.

When Lori and I got home, we unfolded the couch and lay down on the bed. For a moment, we were just winding down from the day.

Breaking the silence, I told her I thought we should make love.

She said we already had.

I went upstairs to my room not feeling rejected. I slept surprisingly well. And when I came downstairs the next morning, Lori Huntington and all her belongings were gone. She never came back to work at the hotel either. I thought I would never again see the girl that had captivated me for seven months.

That was five months ago.

I saw Lori last week in The Village at a little coffee shop. She seemed cheerful to see me and not at all awkward. She said she had moved in with her cousin in Jersey City and she commuted to The Village where she was a waitress.

"I ride the path train over from Journal Square, even though I have a car now," she said. Lori bent a little closer to me and talked quieter.

"I leave it parked in front of the house with the keys in it. When I'm home, I sit by the window and watch. And one day some thug, like the one in Central Park, will get in it and drive off." This was where she smiled.

"He won't even see the little device I have planted under the driver's seat."

Untitled

by Carolyn Godwin

Every moment in time
Has its place in history

It's up to us to fight
And make it worth remembering.

Remember,
It's when life's cold winds blow hardest
That we should open our wings

And fly higher than we ever could have dreamed.

Tri-Age

by Catherine Starkey

From the experiences of
yesterday, learn;
Toward the expectations of
tomorrow, yearn;
During the fulfillment of today,
with all your energy, burn!

Strings of Time

by Tanya Pirson

Strings of time entwine our lives.
They tie the webs of memory
and shape the forms of eternity.

But, we weave the patterns and
sketch the etchings of their destiny.

That Distant Monolith

by G. Paul Ray

I walked hastily to the carriage,
eager to get inside.
It was long and narrow and black
with windows
down each side.
I thought to myself,
as I lay down:
"I'll go for a little ride."
The driver was darkly dressed,
very tall and lean.
I saw his face was quite drawn.
It was pale
and a sickly green.
I thought to myself:
"That smile is wicked,
but not the least bit
mean."
Then spied I that Monolith
and felt the darkened air.
There was much I had left undone:
There was much
which needed my care.
Too late I saw
my destination,
Too late I felt despair.
Onward, ever onward he pressed
toward that distant
Monolith.
He spoke as I tried to focus
on taking
in a breath.
He said: "My name is not
Despair."
He said:
"My name is Death."

MOTHER by Robert Jenkins

Let the Poets Speak

by Elaine D. Graybill

Anthropologists tell us that language reflects the cultural values of the society where it is spoken. If language is that powerful, we should, in the last decade of the 20th Century, examine how our society uses the word time.

Is time really something we can buy, borrow, make or take? Can we squeeze it into a frame, or slice it, like pie, into shares? Madison Avenue tells us that time is money, a commodity to be traded on the open market. We talk about seizing, grabbing and snatching a few moments. These words imply that we are in control, but their tone is desperate, as if we doubt their real meaning.

Let us turn to the poets and listen to what they say about time. The Latin poet, Horace, writing in the 1st Century B.C., warns us that it is not man's place to try to understand the meaning of time. In the poem "Carpe Diem," he tells us that time is inaccessible, and beyond the power or reason, or science:

Pry not into forbidden lore,
Ask no more, Leocouñe
How many years—to you?—
to me?
the gods will send us
before they end us:
Nor, questing, fix your hopes
on Babilonian horoscopes.

Fifteenth Century Europe was a time of conflict, and change. Two poets, the Spaniard Jorge Manrique and the Frenchman Francois Villon ask us to be vigilant, and warn us of the transitory nature of earthly things. In his "Ode on the Death of his Father," Manrique shows us the lesson that can be learned from the great civilizations of the past:

The noble blood of Gothic name,
heroes emblazoned high to fame
in long array—
How, in the onward course
of time,
the landmarks of that
race sublime,
were swept away.

Villon was born in 1431, the year the English Duke of Bedford reigned in the Louvre, and the faculty of the University of Paris decided that Joan of Arc was to be burned. History, then, becomes personalized when he talks about his lifetime:

And that good Joan whom
Englishmen at Roeun doomed
and burned her there—Mother
of God, where are they then . . .
But where are the snows of
yesteryear?

His ballad of the "Ladies of Bygone Days" is a catalog of women of the past, a melancholic elegy to the end of all that is beautiful.

The Mexican poet and philosopher Octavio Paz affirms that we use words to communicate our humanness. Words not only connect men, but also move us from solitude to a place in time. Man, then, is part of a larger order and controlled by time:

We talk because we are mortal:
words are not signs,
they are years,
saying what they say,
the words that we are saying,
say time: they name us,
We are time's names.

Hanging on my kitchen wall is a framed quotation from the American poet Carl Sandburg:

Life is like an onion.
You peel off one layer at a time,
and, sometimes you weep.

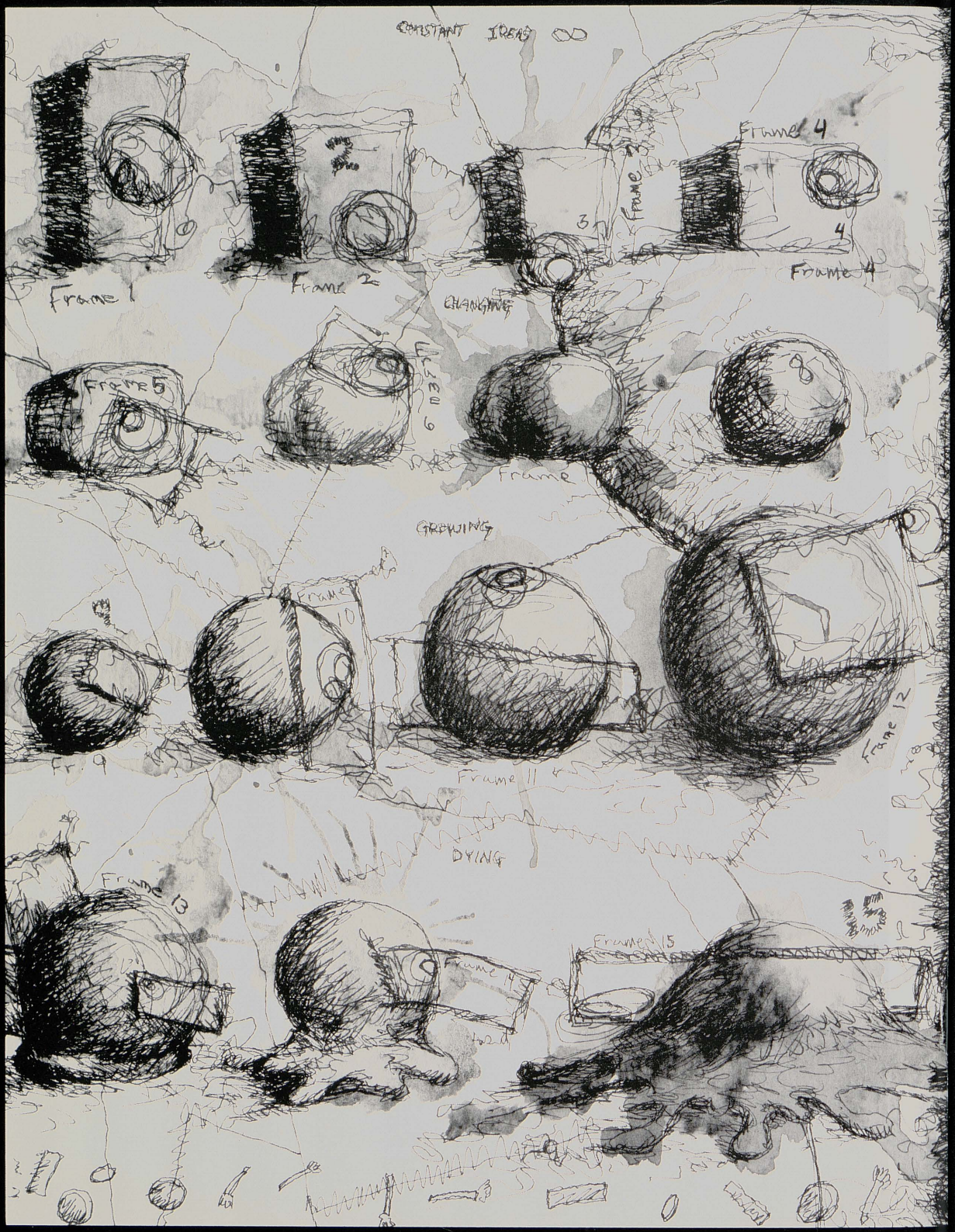
There is something slow and deliberate, about peeling an onion. There is also an element of chance. You may or may not weep.

Let us not deceive ourselves with words that say that time is a property that we can own. It will unfold, in its own way, whether we like it or not. Let us look with wonder at its unfolding and give back to time its mystery.

New Beginning

by Kimberly Diana Allen

I can leave my cloudy past.
And, I can shine through,
. . . Quench the burning embers
of the pain I've know.
I can float upon an ocean of tranquility
And not be afraid of the days I've outgrown.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CHANGING
Frame 5
Frame 6
Frame 7
Frame 8
GROWING
Frame 9
Frame 10
Frame 11
Frame 12
DYING
Frame 13
Frame 14
Frame 15